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Traveling in Alphabets: Narratives of Multilingual Armenian Immigrant Women

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TRAVELING IN ALPHABETS:

NARRATIVES OF MULTILINGUAL ARMENIAN IMMIGRANT WOMEN

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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Indiana University of Pennsylvania

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Title: Traveling in Alphabets: Narratives of Multilingual Armenian Immigrant Women

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This dissertation documents the language and literacy histories of four multilingual Armenian immigrant women settled in the Los Angeles area of California. Via tools of linguistic (auto)biography and narrative inquiry, the participants worked collaboratively with the researcher to co-construct chronicles of their lives in multiple languages; the resulting narratives were then analyzed and interpreted through a critical, feminist lens to identify connections and intersections among the participants' gender, languages, and culture(s).

Within the background chapters, Chapter One introduces the background of the study; Chapter Two presents a review of literature within Armenian and Armenian women's studies, research on multilingualism and multiple-language literacy, and narrative and linguistic autobiography in applied linguistics; and Chapter Three describes the study methodology, including details on the study's data collection methods (focused primarily on extensive individual interviews, logs to track the participants' present experiences with their languages and literacies, and analytical memos/researcher journal entries), the critical and feminist framework of the study, and the interpretive tools used to craft the analysis of the participant narratives. In keeping with the feminist aim of amplifying women's voices, the study data in Chapters Four through Seven are comprised of a narrative chapter for each participant.

The final chapter presents the study findings, implications, reflections, and conclusions, and an afterword is then presented as an update on the participants' lives since the study's data collection period. Study findings include participant-focused situated meanings of terms relevant

to the research questions (i.e. *woman, literacy, language knowledge*, and *English*) as well as salient themes within the narratives (i.e. the participants' roles as women in Armenian and Armenian-American culture, their literacy practices from childhood to adulthood, their positive positioning as language brokers within their community, their complex and dynamic roles along the continuum of privilege and marginalization, and an exploration of the diversity within the group of participants). Springboarding from these findings are a number of participant-, pedagogy-, and research-focused implications and inspirations; and the study concludes with researcher reflections on the research process, especially highlighting the transformative role that critical and feminist qualitative research has for all involved in the research act.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Throughout this process, I have never been alone, and I owe many people for the inspiration and energy required to complete this project. The ones I owe most are identified throughout this document by only pseudonyms, but they know who they are, as do all of the other people I list below. Some of these other names are obvious, but as I am not at liberty to name my participants, the people to whom I owe a considerable portion of my terminal degree, I hereby respectfully list all of my acknowledgements in a similarly confidential manner.

First, I am grateful to my advisor for her guidance and encouragement. I appreciate her willingness to take on a quirky stranger as an advisee, and I know that she has led me to produce my best work. I am grateful to my numerous IUPeeps for their willingness to share their support and various pieces of their works-in-progress. I am grateful to my student-workers-turned-technical-helpers/dogsitters for their attention to detail and ability to sort through pages and pages of references and drafts to help me get this dissertation polished and in full working order. I am grateful to my friends and family who have cheered me on all this way (but I can't promise this means I'm done forever with this school thing). I am grateful to my spouse for reasons innumerable, big and small, tangible and not.

Most of all, I am grateful to my participants, without whom this study, the theoretical and pedagogical insights gleaned from it, and any and all gains I myself have acquired as a result of it absolutely would not exist. No words can ever adequately express my feelings for and about them, so in the place of no words at all, I humbly say to Ալփա, Մագար, Բուռ, and Աննա: Thank you, merci, մերսի, շնորհակալություն, and спасибо. This is for you.

(And finally, I am indebted to the natural resources that have fueled this journey; I look forward to planting many trees to help replenish those that became countless reams of paper.)

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation presents an investigation into the language and literacy histories of four multilingual Armenian immigrant women settled in the Los Angeles area of California. Situated theoretically within critical and feminist perspectives, the study employs principles of narrative inquiry and thematic analysis to learn about the participants' lives in multiple languages and literacies. After working closely with many multilingual Armenian immigrant women as a result of my work in two different California community colleges, it became clear to me that though this population had a voice, it was often muffled as a result of some dominating force, be it the normalized patriarchy of their community, or the monolingual bias ingrained in American higher education, or something else, or none of these — these possibilities, how to identify them, and how, even whether to work toward dismantling them in order to amplify those muffled voices surely began shaping this study before I even knew it existed. Over the last decade, I have been schooled by my students and student workers on a variety of Armenian traditions, expressions, and folk tales; a gracious few of these *de facto* teachers have gone so far as to honor my jovial yet sincere request to be deemed an honorary Armenian woman; and without a doubt, this community has played a distinct and commanding role in my development as a graduate student, language teacher, and scholar. As I reflect on my first experiences with this community that has become such an important part of my life, and the women who have likewise invited me into their lives both prior to and during this project, it was my most fervent intention that this dissertation project would turn my curiosity into expertise, my concerns into advocacy, and my anecdotal evidence into carefully designed research.

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In the next several pages, I sketch out the background against which this study is more vividly painted in the subsequent chapters. This includes information about how I myself entered this field of study, as well as context information about the people and places that make up that field. I introduce research questions that center around (1) what narratives of Armenian immigrant women might tell us about the participants' past and present language and literacy histories, as well as (2) what insights these narratives provide into the intersections of language, gender and culture that the women have enacted and experienced. I then briefly describe how past research has investigated the lives of multilingual participants, summarize the methods employed to conduct this study, and outline the remainder of the chapters in the dissertation. While one of the main purposes of this chapter is to present information pertinent to the context of the study and my place and stance in it, as well as a justification for undertaking this work in the first place, these details flavor the remaining chapters as well. After all, this study places great weight on issues of context, researcher positioning, and collaborative, participant-driven research design, so it makes sense that these issues are referenced and reinforced throughout the remainder of the study.

Context of the Researcher, Context of the Research

Since early 2002, I have worked full-time in an instructional support position for a community college Learning Center, and I have taught at several degree-granting institutions, mostly at the pre-collegiate and lower division levels, since 2006. Over this period of time, I have developed an interest in a population that is minimally present in the TESOL scholarship: the multilingual, multiliterate women of the Armenian immigrant community. In fact, I can trace a great deal of my interest in adding a research focus to my teaching career to a project I completed after receiving my M.A. as part of a course entitled *Socio- and Psycholinguistic*

Applications to Reading Instruction, which I took to fulfill a portion of the minimum

qualifications to teach Reading classes in the California community colleges. For this course

project, I collected and analyzed reading autobiographies from three of my tutees and student

workers, women of various ages and educational backgrounds who had all recently immigrated

from Armenia. It is directly to these women that I can trace the growth of my curiosity about

multilingualism, feminist issues, literacy studies, and the intersections that occur among these

areas of study.

My first semester at Fernando College[1] was in Spring 2002. I was hired as a classified[2]

instructional assistant for the Learning Center, where I would be working as a professional

English tutor, an immediate supervisor to a sizeable student worker staff, and an assistant to the

Learning Center Director. Prior to 2002, when I first began working in California higher

education, I might not have ever heard the name *Armenia*; I simply don't remember. It is likely

that, ages before, I had scribbled this name on one of Ms. Sheraton's seventh-grade map quizzes

aimed to test my knowledge of the republics that made up the USSR, but I just don't remember.

On the contrary, I remember vividly the first encounter I had with Arsineh, one of the Learning

Center tutors I would come to supervise. Arsineh, a biology and chemistry tutor who had

recently transferred to a prestigious California university, came in to my new office with an

important question: *Are you Russian? You look Russian. Are you?* I noted what at the time

sounded perhaps like a Russian accent, though I had yet to embark on my graduate studies in

linguistics or phonology. *No,* I replied. *Are you*? I asked. *No, I am Armenian, but I speak Russian*

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[1] All names of people and schools are pseudonyms.
[2] Classified employees in California schools are all employees who are neither faculty members nor administrators. Though this position involves extensive student contact by way of tutoring and student worker training and supervision, it does not involve direct classroom instruction and does not require a graduate degree. My classroom teaching career began in 2006 after I completed my Master's degree.

too. It was not until some time later, weeks that turned to months, that I began to make out the pattern of her name that identified her, or at least her family origin, as Armenian: that last syllable *-yan*, sometimes spelled *-ian*, meaning "son of", that appears on every Armenian surname.

I have many memories like the one I have of Arsineh, ones that have shaped my growing knowledge of the Armenian community in Los Angeles County, knowledge that is researchable, as evidenced in the first section of Chapter 2, but knowledge that to me initially came from women with first-hand experience in the community. There was Anahit, who first explained the patriarchal Armenian community to me, as she described her household duties that were proving an obstacle to finishing her homework. She cooked meals, cleaned, did laundry, and gave nightly foot massages to her husband, with all but the massages also required for her children, including her adult son who lived with her and the rest of her family. She was allowed to take English classes at the college since they facilitated her getting a driver's license and being able to conduct shopping and family business, but her future education was in question, since English was not needed for her other household roles. Then there was Karmen, who first explained to me why so many people in the area displayed Armenian flags and marched in solidarity around April 24th of each year, to commemorate lives lost in the Armenian genocide and to raise awareness for the genocide to be formally recognized by global government entities. There was Emineh, who taught me some of the differences between the Eastern and Western Armenian languages, and explained to me why so many people in my classes at a neighboring institution came to the United States as Armenian-Farsi bilinguals, because they were Iranian citizens who identified as Armenian. There were many more such encounters, all of which have played at least a small part in leading me to this current study.

Of course, long before walking through my doors, the various facets of the Armenian immigrant community had settled firmly into the Los Angeles area; it was just in 2002 that my eyes first opened to them. The United States has a long history of receiving immigrants from Armenia (Papazian, 2001; Sabagh, Bozorgmehr, & Der-Martirosian, 1990) as well as from other nations of the Armenian diaspora, such as Iran, Iraq, and Lebanon. The first Armenian enclave in America, which still exists today, settled in Worcester, Massachusetts in 1891 (Bournoutian, 1994). Between 1891 and the genocide of 1915, tens of thousands more Armenians arrived in the United States (Bournoutian, 1994), with one major settlement created in Fresno, California. The Fresno community continued to grow until the Depression of the 1930s, when the Los Angeles community began to see tremendous growth (Bournoutian, 1994). Specifically, Los Angeles County, California is home to a large population of first and subsequent generation Armenian immigrants, including a significant Persian-Armenian community in Glendale, a large Russian-Armenian population in the San Fernando Valley, and a *Little Armenia* district located in the eastern section of Hollywood (See Figure 1). In fact, the Los Angeles area is estimated to house the largest community of Armenians outside of the national borders of Armenia (Kasbarian, 1998), and some have gone so far as to nickname the city *Los Armenios* (Manoogian, 2000).

Researching Multilingual Populations

The term *multilingual* is one that has come to the forefront as TESOL researchers have used it to describe various other-than-monolingual populations. Some use this term in a way that subsumes *bilingual*, indicating a distinction between knowledge of a single language (*monolingual*) and knowledge of two or more languages (*multilingual*) (e.g., Franceschini, 2008; Wei, 2008); such a distinction mirrors the singular-plural division used when describing, among other things, the English noun system, which also does not differentiate between dual and plural.

Figure 1. Signs in the Los Angeles Armenian community. Left: Sign marking the Los Angeles enclave known as Little Armenia. Image credit: Asbarez Newspaper, 2010. Right: Signage for the Olive Market, the Armenian market near Fernando College. Image credit: Olive Fresh Garden MarketPlace, 2011.

Other researchers (e.g., Hornberger, 2003; Pavlenko, 2003[3]) have used the prefix *bi-* in place of *multi-* to refer to knowledge of more than a single literacy or language, while still others (e.g., Kemp, 2009; Todeva & Cenoz, 2009) insist on maintaining the distinction between *bi-* and *multilingualism*, choosing to highlight differences in second language acquisition compared to third/subsequent language acquisition. My own study does not *a priori* highlight differences in second vs. subsequent language acquisition; however, the multilingual participants in this study are indeed women who speak and use more than two languages on a regular basis, so *bilingual* is not as accurate or satisfying an adjective as *multilingual* is. As a result, my preference for *multilingual* is one that is meaningful and deliberate.

As research on multilingual populations has grown, so have the methods for carrying out this research. One area that has blossomed significantly in the last decade is the use of various aspects of participants' life stories to particularize how lived experiences affect and are affected

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[3] The majority of Pavlenko's later work, however, employs *multilingual* in place of *bilingual* to refer to people with knowledge of more than one language.

by knowledge and use of multiple languages. Pavlenko's (2008b) *linguistic autobiography*, a term used to name stories in which participants detail and reflect upon their language learning processes, has been especially influential in research on multilingual populations, both in applied linguistics in general as well as in many specific facets of this study. Stemming from *linguistic autobiographies,* I have modified the name of my participant stories to *language and literacy histories* to more accurately describe the stories that are documented in this dissertation; what I retain from Pavlenko's and other scholars' work (e.g., Flowerdew & Miller, 2008; Lanza, 2008) with this type of data is an emphasis on critical and feminist perspectives that underscore the role of the participant in the creation and analysis of such histories. This study also continues a line of inquiry that not only combines the study of story with critical perspectives, but also incorporates issues pertinent to immigrant and gender identity into the study of multilingual populations (e.g., Burck, 2005; Liversage, 2009; Menard-Warwick, 2004).

Significance and Purposes of the Research

The need for understanding and addressing the language and literacy histories of particular facets of the Armenian immigrant community in southern California has been addressed in local contexts, primarily in the form of unpublished dissertations completed at California institutions. This work has focused primarily on the needs and experiences of elementary and secondary students of Armenian origin and includes King (2007) on fifth and sixth grade Armenian-speaking students classified as long-term English learners enrolled in California public schools; Samkian (2007) on identity issues of Armenian high school students in California; and Ekimyan (2003) a mixed-methods study focusing specifically on first-generation Armenian-American college students. Likewise, a few of the completed dissertations have addressed educational issues that may have pertinence for Armenian immigrant women entering

U.S. community colleges, such as Terzian (2010) on curricular reform in post-Soviet Armenia, and Dimmitt (1994) on language policy and language choice in educational institutions in post-Soviet Armenia.

While these in-depth studies help shed light on some facets of the Armenian immigrant experience, none delves even superficially into the lived experiences of Armenian immigrant women. There is, however, a small community of researchers and advocates who make up the Armenian International Women's Association (AIWA), an organization devoted to calling attention to a wide range of gender-focused issues in the Armenian community. Even still, since its inception over twenty years ago, the AIWA Press has to date only published three small edited collections of its conference proceedings. From a feminist perspective, there is an intrinsic value in research about women and other populations that have suffered in some way from societal domination or oppression; as a result, there is a continued need to fill gaps in the literature relevant to the experiences of multilingual and multiliterate women such as those whose stories are presented in this study. While this can shed light onto the general process of becoming multilingual and multiliterate, its value is enhanced with an emphasis on the effects of gender on this process. This study thus works toward accomplishing the purpose of investigating and highlighting the intertwining elements of the gendered, multiliterate, multilingual experience.

The need for studies on multilingual Armenian immigrant women is also immediate in areas where these research participants may exert an understated, but by no means silent, influence: as mothers of students enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools in the Los Angeles area, where students whose first language is Armenian are numerous. For example, among students in the Los Angeles Unified School District whose home language is not English,

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Armenian places third behind Spanish and Korean in first and second place respectively (Los Angeles Unified School District, 2007). Additionally, in the adjacent Glendale Unified School District, more students claim Armenian than English as their first language (Gao, 2002). This appears to mirror the situation in the area's community colleges, although those data are a bit less detailed and more focused on individual institutional needs (e.g., Glendale Community College Office of Research and Planning, 2009).

Compared to the information available, however slight, on public school and community college students of Armenian origin in Southern California, there is a palpable absence of studies on the households from which these students come; the language and literacy histories of multilingual Armenian immigrant women have yet to be told, as little work has been done to examine the lived experiences of immigrant women of Armenian heritage who have settled in the United States. The telling of these heretofore muted stories thus comprises another foundational purpose of this work. Additionally, multiple scholars have pointed to the need to understand the home language and literacy practices of multilingual learners as a way to improve subsequent language and literacy instruction (Ball & Muhammad, 2003; Mangelsdorf, 2010; Marshall, 2010), so grasping how these women's stories may help us understand the home literacy practices of multilingual people across the age span, and thus improve language and literacy teaching, serves a third purpose for this work.

As I embark on this investigation into the language and literacy histories and practices of my very particular set of participants, it is vital to overtly acknowledge some of the distinct factors that deem this population inherently heterogeneous, rather than inherently the same, based on their gender, language background, and national heritage. This acknowledgement quite naturally accompanies my understanding as a qualitative researcher that, regardless of how

salient the so-called shared variables — in quantitative parlance — may be within the population to be researched, the differences among the participants are at least as worthy of detailing as the similarities are. It follows, then, that while this study details the experiences of a small population of *multilingual Armenian immigrant women*, there is a potential for variety in terms of what makes up their individual multilingualism, as well as what their individual family legacies have given them with regard to their Armenian heritage. Unpacking and understanding the qualities of these different levels of variety is therefore a fourth purpose that I intend for this dissertation to fulfill.

As a result, this dissertation adds to the literature on the Armenian diaspora in the United States, and Southern California in particular; language and literacy issues pertinent to a diasporic language minority; and, most importantly, the language and literacy histories of this population, and how those histories intersect with the different identity categories that the participants embody. It is my hope and goal that this work thus adds understanding to the more general phenomenon of being multiply literate, how multiple-language literacy can be and has been achieved, and how such literacy contributes to individuals' constructions and perceptions of power as it intersects with other social categories relevant to social identity, including gender and immigrant status.

Research Questions

While the nature of qualitative research required some degree of flexibility in terms of what I hoped or expected to learn in the research process, this dissertation process has ultimately led to insights into the following major research questions:

1. What are the participants' past and present experiences with living in multiple languages and literacies? In other words, what language and literacy history emerges from each of the participant's narratives?

2. What insights about the intersections of language, culture, and gender emerge from the narratives?

Theoretical Framework: Feminist Communitarian Ethics

The overarching theoretical framework in this dissertation is one grounded in feminist communitarian ethics (Christians, 2002; Christians, 2003; Denzin, 1997; Denzin, 2003). This framework very crucially addresses relationships of power, most relevantly including, in this research act, the relationships between my participants and me, the researcher. This approach deems that "power is relational, characterized by mutuality rather than sovereignty. Power from this perspective is reciprocal between two subjects, a relationship not of domination, but of intimacy and vulnerability" (Christians, 2003, p. 233). This approach undergirds all aspects of this inquiry, especially the research questions and the methods used to answer those questions.

First, in terms of my own underlying stance toward this project, feminist communitarian ethics addresses how I as the researcher approach my participants dialogically, compassionately, and empathetically (Denzin, 1997); this stance is also common to other types of feminist research approaches which prioritize collaborative, nonexploitative relationships among all involved in the research, with the overt aim of avoiding objectification (Creswell, 2007). Second, with regard to the research questions, understanding the language and literacy histories of heretofore un(der)studied populations addresses this framework's "substantive goal" of seeing to "the flourishing of particular cultures" by understanding that "all human cultures have something important to say" (Christians, 2003, p. 230). Finally, with regard to methods employed to answer

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the research questions, this model insists that "participants have a coequal say in how research should be conducted, what should be studied, which methods should be used, which findings are valid and acceptable, [and] how the findings are to be implemented" (Denzin, 2003, p. 257).

Critical and Feminist Approaches to Research

In conjunction with feminist communitarian ethics as the main framework here are additional aspects of the critical and feminist prism through which I view this study. While both of these approaches foreground issues of power as it is exercised by and on the people participating in the research, the latter more specifically highlights ways in which gender relations affect power relations and vice versa. Regarding the former, Carspecken (1996) has summarized,

> Those of us who openly call ourselves "criticalists" definitely share a value orientation. We are all concerned about social inequalities, and we direct our work toward positive social change [and] share a concern with social theory and some of the basic issues it has struggled with since the 19th century. These include the nature of social structure, power, culture, and human agency. (p. 3)

Perhaps one of the most well-known methods for carrying out critically-focused language research comes to us in the form of Fairclough's (1995) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), a valuable tool for connecting critical theoretical frameworks to analytical methods that strive to achieve critical aims. Gee (1999, 2004) has devised additional principles for conducting his own variety of CDA; his (2011) *situated meanings* construct, which aims to investigate context-specific meanings attributed to words and phrases, comprises the initial analytical tool used to interpret the data for this study.

On a final critical note, I further intend for this work to attend to Freire's (2001) call for examining "the colonial legacy" and for creating work that helps participants to "study and critically understand their reality, including their language, culture, gender, ethnicity, and class position" (xxvii). In this dissertation, my participants and I, together, have engaged in a study leading to the critical understandings Freire calls for. My research framework therefore also relies upon a justice-based approach intent on addressing and reducing discrimination based on linguistic background or immigration status. Although these intentions may not have made up the primary purposes for this research, they were nevertheless issues that I held in mind as I moved forward in this research.

Research Design

In keeping with qualitative research principles, I recursively analyzed the data for this study both during and after the process of data collection. I collected data between July and November, 2012, and prior to the participants' initial interviews, I met with each woman to explain and discuss the Informed Consent Form (see Appendix A). After each woman agreed to participate in the study, I gave them a copy of the "Initial Writing Prompt for Participant's Language and Literacy History" (see Appendix B). The purposes of this prompt were to get the women engaged in the creation of their language and literacy histories, to preview the types of questions I aimed to ask them, as well as to allow them an immediate opportunity to bow out of the study if questions in the initial prompt proved difficult to address or if, for whatever reason, the subject of the study was not one that they were interested in pursuing with me. Though I had created a general interview protocol to guide my weekly meetings with the participants (see Appendix C), these initial prompts served as the starting point for each participant's series of individual interviews.

Between July and November, 2012, I met individually with each participant for a total of approximately ten hours of interviews, all of which were transcribed throughout the data collection process. In all but one case, the individual interviews took place over the course of eight weekly meetings during July and August. One participant, who chose the pseudonym *Root*, was unable to meet during most of August, so we met weekly during July, took a break until late October, and concluded our meetings in November. Each week I also asked participants to journal their daily activities with their languages and literacies, providing blank journals and sample templates (see Appendices D and E) to help them capture their activities in progress. Three of the four participants journaled for the first week of the study, with logs in later weeks provided only sporadically. Participants were much more interested in discussing their past and present experiences through face-to-face interviews, so I made sure to provide time during each meeting for reflections that might have otherwise been provided in writing, had they gone that route.

Though I had originally planned to supplement data from the written logs and individual interviews with two focus groups, the summer proved hectic for three of the participants who had supervisory responsibilities for their children or grandchildren who were out of school during this data collection period. Therefore, rather than meeting with the participants in focus groups, I had participants choose a convenient time to follow-up during January 2013, so that I could go over some of the themes that would have otherwise prompted discussion in the focus groups. These follow-up meetings lasted approximately one hour each and due to their informal nature were documented with field notes rather than digital recordings and transcripts. Throughout the data collection period, I also kept a researcher journal to document my ongoing reflections and analyses as they occurred. To my personal reflections in the journal I also added analytical

memos, composed after each individual interview and at other times throughout data analysis to keep track of narrative timelines, situated meanings, and interpretive themes as they emerged from each interview. From these data emerged a co-constructed language and literacy history for each participant, an ongoing narrative that located the women's stories along Clandin and Connelly's (2000) three-dimensional narrative inquiry space of past, present, and future experiences. These co-constructed histories, member-checked during and after the interview period, provided a means for addressing the study's first research question, focused on describing the multilingual participants' past and present language and literacy histories.

Additionally, as and after I compiled the data into the narratives that addressed the first research question, I worked carefully within Gee's (1999; 2011) framework of critical discourse analysis to identify the *situated meanings* of particular terms that were narrated in each participant's story-telling process; these situated meanings then led to a deeper understanding of some of the interpretive themes that emerged from the data. My understanding of such meanings and interpretive themes comprises the answer to this study's second research question, which uses details from the participants' narratives to explore a range of insights about the intersections of language, culture, and gender that emerge from the narratives.

Chapter Organization

The following two chapters provide substantial background information on my study, and subsequent chapters present the narratives and analyses which address this study's research questions. The literature review in Chapter Two covers background information on Armenian and Armenian women's studies, research on multilingualism and multilingual populations, and the use of language and literacy autobiographies as a source of data in applied linguistics, and then presents an overview of past research that has studied multilingual issues with

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autobiographical data. Chapter Three presents the methodology of the study, including an overview of critical and feminist research within qualitative inquiry, as well as brief background into narrative research and critical discourse analysis. In that chapter, I also describe the context of the study in more detail and lay out the research design that I used to answer this dissertation's two major research questions. Chapters Four through Seven, relying primarily on Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) tenets of narrative inquiry, address the first research question by presenting each participant's language and literacy history, while Chapter Eight details the situated meanings and interpretive themes that help address the second research question, which explores insights about the intersections of language, culture, and gender that emerge from the women's narratives.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study about the language and literacy histories and practices of multilingual Armenian immigrant women is situated in and adds to a few distinct areas of scholarship, including (1) Armenian and Armenian women's studies and (2) multilingual language and literacy practices, with the latter examined closely through analysis of participants' co-constructed language and literacy histories. This chapter presents an overview of some of the major recent and relevant work that has been done within these research realms, helping to clarify and justify the crossroads at which this dissertation uniquely finds itself.

The chapter is organized into the following major sections: The first section addresses pertinent background information in Armenian and Armenian women's studies, which contextualizes the study with regard to the participants in focus here. The second and third background sections review terminology and current issues in multilingual studies and in the use of language and literacy histories as research data, respectively. The last section presents an overview of bi-/ multilingual studies research that has used language and literacy histories as data, including details about research questions, theoretical frameworks, and findings from past studies.

Background: Armenian Studies

Armenian Studies covers a range of historical and contemporary issues related to Armenian culture. The most important issues that pertain to the current study have to do with the establishment and current status of the Armenian nation, which helps explain immigration patterns into the United States; the Armenian language and literacy in that language, both of which play a vital role in establishing and maintaining a sense of Armenian identity, especially in

the Armenian diaspora; and a small though vibrant body of scholarship in Armenian women's studies, some of which has incorporated narrative, autobiography, and critical perspectives as foundations for research.

Genocide, Diaspora, and Migration

Despite the fact that Armenian civilization is the oldest in its geographical location to have survived (Balakian, 2003), this survival has been fraught with extreme, centuries-long oppression and conflict. For instance, in the late 16th and early 17th centuries, the Shah of neighboring Iran invaded and overtook some key Armenian territories, forcing many residents out of their homes and into resettlement communities in Iran; thus was born the Persian-Armenian community that exists to this day, known then and since as the largest Christian minority population in Iran. Furthermore, in the 20th century alone, Armenia was ravaged by ethnic cleansing and genocide, twice declared independence, and spent 55 years as a republic of the USSR. Following the fall of the Soviet Union, Armenia was recognized as an independent nation in March of 1992 (Bournoutian, 1994). Among these seminal events in Armenian history, none is more prominent, still, in Armenian collective memory than the Armenian Genocide by Ottoman rulers, which took place during the period of 1915-1922. Understood as an organized, state-sponsored attempt at ethnic cleansing, the attacks on Armenians, who had declared Christianity as the official religion in the fourth century, were also tied inseparably to religion. The massacres leading up to the Genocide, as well as the Genocide itself, were spawned as a response by the Ottoman sultan to what was known as the Armenian Question. As Balakian (2003) explained:

In short, the Armenian Question revolved around the issue of much-needed reform for oppressed Armenians — the largest Christian minority living under Ottoman Turkish rule

in Anatolia. [The] sultan had decided that the only way to eliminate the Armenian

Question was to eliminate the Armenians themselves. (p. 5)

It is important to note that although only one of this study's participants is directly descended

from Genocide survivors, this historical period in the early twentieth century accounted for the

first sizeable wave of immigration by Armenians into the United States. Moreover, even among

Armenians who are not direct Genocide descendants, the Genocide is "a frequent topic addressed

in Armenian publications and other forums. Clearly, the Genocide is a community

preoccupation" (Keshgegian, 1995, p. 169). Thus its legacy prevails and warrants discussion

here.

The American government, under political pressure from the Turkish government, has

never formally acknowledged the early 20th century events in Armenia as a genocide. However,

America played a vital role in the relief efforts leading up to and during that period, beginning in

1896 when the major violence ensued at the hands of the Ottoman Sultan Abdul Hamid II. In

fact, the American involvement on behalf of Armenians in 1896 marked the first time in history

that Congress worked specifically and sincerely to address an international human rights tragedy

(Balakian, 2003). For Americans, the gravity of the tragedy has essentially faded and is rarely

addressed outside of areas with major Armenian immigrant communities, but it was nevertheless

at one time so foremost in the American consciousness that "President Hoover would say,

looking back at 1919, the 'name *Armenia* was at the front of the American mind…known to the

American schoolchild only a little less than England'" (Balakian, 2003, p. 282). Though this

current study on the language and literacy practices of women born after the Genocide does not

name the Genocide as a focus, I nevertheless understood the importance of this historical period

as I embarked on the primary research. As I began initial interviews, I was mindful of Avakian's

(2000) study built on interviews with various generations of Armenian-American women, in which "[a]ll but one of the 18 women [she] interviewed talked about the Genocide without [being asked] an initial question about it" (pp. 13-14).

The Genocide (1915-1922), as well as the two previous major massacres of Armenians (1896 in Anatolia and 1909 in Adana), resulted in a combined death toll of up to 1.5 million people (Balakian, 2003). Hundreds of thousands more were expelled and forced to seek refuge in neighboring areas such as Syria, Iraq, Palestine, Russia, and Iran, where today there remain visible Armenian communities. Balakian (2003) noted that "[m]any survivors stayed in those areas, and many migrated in the following decades to Europe, the United States, India, China, Australia, and South America in what became a major 20th century diaspora" (p. 176). It has been widely noted that the population of Armenians in the diaspora outnumbers those living within the national borders of Armenia (Bournoutian, 1994; Kasbarian, 1998; Panossian, 2006; Peroomian, 2000). Recent research on the diaspora, or *spiurk* as it is called in Armenian, names Russia as the home of the largest Armenian diaspora, with a population of up to 1.5 million (Pavlenko, 2008a); Russia's proximity to Armenia enables a degree of transnational travel and existence that is not available to *spiurk* members on more distant continents. Among the diasporan population on those distant continents, southern California, the Los Angeles area in particular, is now considered to house the largest community of Armenians (Kasbarian, 1998), and some have gone so far as to nickname the city *Los Armenios* (Manoogian, 2000).

While the largest influx of Armenian immigrants to the United States arrived during and immediately after the period of the Genocide (Kasbarian, 1998), other circumstances also contributed to the creation of the Armenian community in the United States. Prior to the Turkish and Kurdish attacks on Armenians in Anatolia and neighboring areas in 1895, there was already

a small group of Armenians who had settled in Worcester, Massachusetts, having built a church there in 1891 (Bournoutian, 1994). After the 1895 attacks but before the Genocide, tens of thousands arrived in the United States (Bournoutian, 1994), with one major settlement created in Fresno, California. The Fresno community, which itself experienced a great deal of ethnic discrimination, grew until the Depression, when the Los Angeles community began to see tremendous growth (Bournoutian, 1994). Other waves of immigration to North America ensued as a result of the Displaced Persons Act of 1948, political upheavals in the Middle East from the 1950s through the 1980s, flight from the Soviet-controlled republic of Armenia in the 1970s and 1980s, a major earthquake in 1988, and after the fall of communism and the beginning of major economic woes for the independent nation in the 1990s. With these trends in mind, all of my research participants are first generation immigrant women from the nation and former Soviet republic of Armenia, so in their recounting of their lives with multiple languages and literacies, they are also adding to the ongoing story of Armenian immigration patterns into the United States in general, and into the Los Angeles area specifically.

Armenian Identity and the Armenian Language

There is by now an extensive research tradition that addresses the inextricable link between language and identity, to the extent that there is an academic journal, the *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education*, devoted to its study. The importance of the Armenian language to proclaiming and maintaining an Armenian identity has also been specifically discussed in the Armenian studies literature. Traditionally, "[t]he most important cultural markers of Armenians have been religion and language" (Yumul, 2000, p. 207), and the development of literacy in Armenian was itself tied closely to religion and the ability to read the Christian Bible in a script created solely for use in the Armenian language. Some sources name

religion, with Armenia being the first nation to declare Christianity as the official state religion, as the single most important characteristic of establishing the earliest sense of Armenian identity, especially since the Genocide was so closely linked to Armenians' religious identity (Panossian, 2006).

More recently, Armenian studies scholars have begun to question and address some prickly issues linking knowledge of the Armenian language to the Armenian identity, especially in the wake of the numerous diaspora populations, whose usage of Armenian as a community language has often developed alongside proficiency in the dominant language of the region (Panossian, 2006). In one such study, Avakian (1995) asked the rhetorical questions, "Must one be involved in community life, or speak the language, to qualify as a real Armenian? Is regular church attendance a requirement?" (p. 153). Likewise, poet and novelist Kricorian (2005), in recounting her experiences reading her work — written in English — to Armenian audiences, wrote about how her very credibility was questioned for her lack of Armenian proficiency. Though Kaprielian (2000) has begun asking "whether speaking or understanding Armenian is the only principal definition of being Armenian" (p. 220), she still concedes that identity, for many in the Armenian community, is rooted in the Armenian language. Likewise, of crucial relevance in my primary research is an understanding of how my participants, multilingual women of the *spiurk*, perceive the relationship among their languages, literacies, and identities, Armenian and otherwise.

The Armenian Language(s) and Alphabet

There are three major varieties of the Armenian language. Classical Armenian is the oldest variety, known in Armenian as *grapar* or *grabar* (Kasbarian, 1998; Weitenberg, 1990); it is used only in Armenian Apostolic Church rituals and is unintelligible to speakers of the two

modern varieties. These two varieties, known collectively in Armenian as *ashkharabar* (Panossian, 2006) are Eastern and Western Armenian. Eastern Armenian is spoken in Armenia, Russia, and Iran, and was influenced in its development by the Russian and Persian/Farsi languages. Western Armenian, "which Eastern Armenians call Turkish jargon" (Bateson, 1995, p. 4), is spoken by Armenians now living in Turkey, Lebanon, and Syria, among other nearby areas, and had major influences from Latin, Greek, and Turkish (Kasbarian, 1998).

All of the participants in this study grew up speaking the Eastern Armenian variant. In fact, I can recall asking one of the women, prior to developing my study as a dissertation, how I could easily remember the difference and know which variety my students likely spoke. She pointed to the middle of her chest and, emphasizing the long *e* sound — [i] in the International Phonetic Alphabet — she firmly asserted that "W*E* speak *Ea*stern Armenian," referring to people from the nation of Armenia. I said, "Okay, so the *e* sound in WE sounds like the vowel in EAST. Arm*E*nians from Arm*E*nia speak the *E*astern version." "Yes!" she said. Quickly picking up on my mnemonic device, she then emphasized the short *e* sound — [ɛ] in the International Phonetic Alphabet — and continued, "And the [ɛ] sound in W*E*ST is like the sound in TH*E*M," meaning that Armenian people who were raised in many areas of the diaspora outside of the Armenian nation, speak Western Armenian. In these two short sentences, she linked her language to her identity, and that connection was addressed extensively in this study's individual interviews.

In the post-Genocide era, another development affecting the Armenian language used by some of my participants was the requirement during the Soviet period that students learn the Russian language (Bournoutian, 1994). Despite this requirement, the Armenian language still held official status within the republic, and Armenia was one of only three Soviet republics (all neighbors in the Transcausal region) to maintain its so-called titular language as official for the

duration of Soviet rule (Pavlenko, 2008a; Zeitlian, 1995). Though Bournoutian (1994) labels compulsory Russian during the Soviet era as a "blow" to Armenia (p. 163), it partially accounts for the multilingual status of the participants, an area of inquiry that is also explored in the primary research. Additionally, in the post-Soviet era, Russian is still in wide use in the nation of Armenia due to economic issues, such as improved job prospects in Russia (Pavlenko, 2008c) and increasing import-export trade relations between Russia and neighboring countries (Pavlenko, 2008a), and there have been government initiatives to maintain Russian as part of Armenians' multilingual repertoire (Pavlenko, 2008c). Pavlenko (2008c) found that even for young people growing up in Armenia today, Russian media and literature continue to exert an influence on fashion and music, and the linguistic landscape in Yerevan, the country of Armenia, is essentially trilingual, with English serving as the third language likely to appear on signage.

Also of crucial importance is that under policy enacted in 2001, regardless of the elevated status of Armenian as the national language, language minority rights are actively protected in Armenia (Pavlenko, 2008a; Pavlenko, 2008c). Thus, in addition to using Russian as a lingua franca for economic purposes, heritage speakers of Russian and the four other officially protected languages are also

> entitled to education in their native languages, under state patronage and with obligatory study of Armenian; to information in the native languages; to TV and radio broadcasts in the native language; to the use of free interpreters in court proceedings; and to the use of native languages in religious, economic, and social activities. (Pavlenko, 2008a, p. 293)

Contemporary language policy in Armenia thus supports multilingualism, at least on paper. The primary research in this study provides a deeper, more personal understanding of how this policy has affected language development and multilingualism within the nation of Armenia

and within the diaspora, and provides examples of the message behind an old Armenian proverb that translates roughly to "As many languages as you know, that's how many people you are" (Kricorian, 2005, p. 212) or "For every language you know, you become another person" (Manoogian, 2000, p. 309).

The development of Armenian as a written language is also relevant to the connection between the Armenian language and speakers'/writers' identities, especially since the development of the writing system itself has a basis in the Armenian cultural-religious identity. The story of the creation of the Armenian alphabet is a familiar tale taught to small children in Armenian-speaking homes, as I learned in some of my early conversations with Armenian women, conversations which formed a crucial basis for development of this study. Though the exact date is the subject of debate, Nersoyan (1986) found a consensus among scholars that the clergyman Mesrop Mashtots, at the request of political leaders, devised a script early in or around the year 405 A.D. (see Figure 2). There were Greek and Syrian scripts in use at the time, but the leaders determined that using either script may have inadvertently declared unwanted political alliances or loyalties, so a new script was commissioned (Nersoyan, 1986). The unique script would correspond with Armenia's unique status as the first nation to have adopted Christianity as its official religion approximately 100 years before (Aivazian, 2000), with the alphabet and religion both serving as "identity cards" for the Armenian people (Kasbarian, 1998, p. 29). Panossian (2006) summarized the relationship between the alphabet and Armenian identity well:

> The alphabet gave Armenians a unique textual-literary basis for their language and linguistic identity. [Other] scripts were no longer needed for written communications. This further isolated Armenians from external cultural influences as it made their written

Armenian Alphabet

Ա ա Բ բ Գ գ Դ դ Ե ե Զ զ Է է Ը ը Թ թ Ժ ժ Ի ի Լ լ Խ խ
a   p   k   t   e   z   e   t   zh   i   l   kh

Ծ ծ Կ կ Հ հ Ձ ձ Ղ ղ Ճ ճ Մ մ Յ յ Ն ն Շ շ Ո ո Չ չ Պ պ
dz g h ts gh j m y n sh o ch b

Ջ ջ Ռ ռ Ս ս Վ վ Տ տ Ր ր Ց ց և Փ փ Ք ք Օ օ Ֆ ֆ
ch r s v d r ts v p k o f
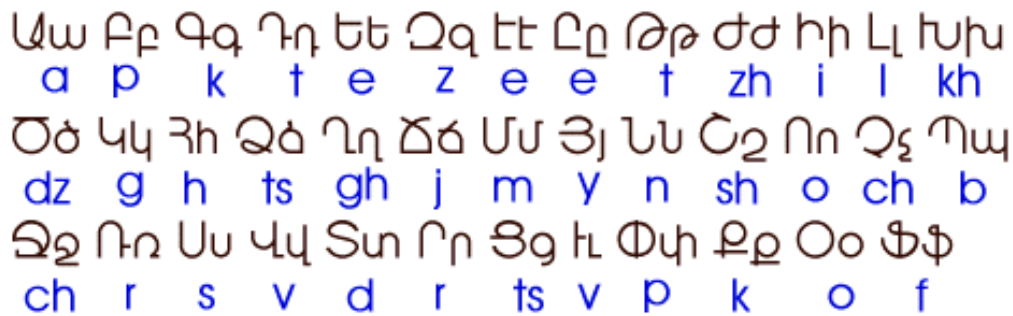
Figure 2. The Armenian alphabet. Image credit: Ed George, 1999.

language even more inaccessible to people outside the community, while it standardized written communication among Armenians themselves. (pp. 45-46)

The creation of the alphabet was followed by what is now considered the classical period of the Armenian language. The classical *grabar* language continued to be used in both spoken and written form until the end of the ninth century, when the vernacular *ashkharabar* varieties replaced the *grabar* as the spoken variant outside of formal church activities (Weitenberg, 1990). Mirroring what seems now to be a natural part of the development of written forms of language varieties, heated ideological debates arose about the use of the vernacular as a literary language, with the main complaint from *grabar*ians being that the vernaculars were not sufficiently codified to qualify as a literary language (Weitenberg, 1990). After Armenians assisted with the establishment of the first Middle East printing house in mid-17th century Iran (Kasbarian, 1998), both vernacular and classical grammars were compiled and printed by the Mkhitarist monastic sect, who are credited as being "instrumental in the formation of the linguistic basis of modern Armenian identity" (Panossian, 2006, pp. 103-4). By the end of the 18th century, classical works of European literature were being translated and printed in Armenian, and the Armenian

periodicals published between 1812 and 1866 "played a major role in the political awakening of the Armenian masses" (Bournoutian, 1994, p. 19).

By 1896, when the bloody sieges and massacres began as a response to the so-called Armenian Question — the question of what to do with the oppressed Armenian minorities, answered with the decision to attempt to eliminate them — there was a strong tradition tying the language and its writing system to a keen sense of Armenian identity. This tie was indeed so strong that it played a major role in who was chosen first to be exterminated by the Ottomans, such that Armenian writers were among the first wave of Genocide victims imprisoned and killed (Balakian, 2003). Ottoman leaders saw literacy — especially writing — as a powerful weapon of resistance by Armenians, and the Genocide was essentially an "apocalypse for Armenian literature," during which at least 82 writers were murdered (Balakian, 2003, p. 216). Against this historical backdrop, my participants' language and literacy histories and practices are now situated.

Armenian Women's Studies

In the small but slowly growing field of Armenian women's studies, there is one major organization known as the Armenian International Women's Association (AIWA). Created in 1990 for the purpose of empowering contemporary Armenian women in the face of always being spoken for by the men of the society (Medzorian, 2005), the "AIWA Press is the only organization in the world that seeks to unite Armenian women worldwide and to address their concerns and interests [and] to extend the international dialogue and understanding of Armenian women's issues" (Moranian, 2005, p. ix). That said, the organization itself has only 350 international members, and it is only by physical library searches and no small amount of good fortune that I became aware of the organization's existence.

While scholarly database and library searches for *Armenian women* will yield some results, few of these do more than merely mention Armenian women in the context of issues unrelated to those in focus in this dissertation. An internet search using Google Scholar provided sources focusing primarily on women's health care, and a general Google search did nothing more than provide evidence that for many outside of, physically distant from, or otherwise unaware of the Armenian community, Armenian women are exemplified nearly entirely by the celebrity Kardashian sisters. Fortunately, though, I work as an adjunct faculty member in the Credit ESL department at Gabriel[4] Community College (GCC), which is located in one of the largest North American Armenian communities, with an Armenian population of about 50,000 (Kasbarian, 1998). The student demographic in my department at GCC is overwhelmingly Armenian, including many immigrant and resident students who are Iranian refugees of Armenian heritage. In the course of investigating the GCC library stacks for some specific volumes on Armenian Studies, I fortuitously came across three collections of papers that had been published following international meetings of the AIWA Press; without browsing the stacks, I may have remained unaware of the AIWA Press and its publications, but it is in them that a great deal of information, relatively speaking, about Armenian women and *by* Armenian women has been published.

In contemporary Armenian society, women have been "dominated by the male psyche [since a] woman is first her father's daughter, then she is the wife of a husband, and then she is the mother of her son" (Mekhitarian Terzian, 2005, p. 30). Of these roles, that of mother appears culturally foremost. "To my question, 'What is a woman?' Armenian women answer, 'She is a mother.'" (Sahakyan, 2005, p. 185). Taking on this role, though, is not necessarily always

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[4] As a reminder, all names of people and schools are pseudonyms.

documented as an instance of being dominated. It is important for outsiders to the Armenian

community not to automatically and exclusively categorize the maternal role as a subservient

one, as it also potentially inscribes a degree of power onto the woman as keeper of the collective

memory and culture, a culture which both reveres woman as mother and yet at the same time

may see little use for her other than that. On one hand is the image of Mother Armenia, in

Armenian *Mayr Hayastan*, a statue overlooking the Armenian capital city of Yerevan (see Figure

3). The statue, 72 feet high atop a 95-foot base, serves as

> the legendary guardian of the Armenians, the ever-watchful mother who protects them
>
> from fear and harm, inspires hope and the will to survive… once mourning the desolation
>
> of her land and people and now rising on the hill … ready to draw her sword in defense
>
> of her land and people. (Zeitlian, 2000, p. 131)

The woman, according to Armenian proverbs, is as valuable to society as food and

wisdom, since she "does not allow the thread of life to be cut," (Hagopian, 1995, p. 45). As

respectful as such a saying may intend to be, though, it allows for little resistance to the primary

role that Armenian women are expected to fulfill. In the early 20th century, childless married

women were essentially voiceless, prohibited from speaking to their mothers-in-law until not just

the birth of the first child, but the first male child, and this prohibition was meant to be

guaranteed by forcing these young women to wear black kerchiefs across their mouths until the

first son's birth (Merguerian, G. K., 1995). Still persistent today in households with children is

the image of father-as-king, in which wife and children alike must comply with the father's

wishes (Yegavian, 2000). Furthermore, women's connections to the family as mother may also

result in an underestimation of her intellect or work ability, or indeed any ability other than that

of mothering (Matinian & Hakobyan, 2005; Torosyan, 2005). Even during the Soviet period,

Figure 3. Images of *Mayr Hayastan*, or Mother Armenia. Left: 2005 Armenian postage stamp. Image credit: Armenian Stamps, 2013. Right: Photograph of the full *Mayr Hayastan* statue located in Victory Park overlooking Yerevan, the capital city of Armenia. Image credit: Yerevan Municipality Official Website, 2011.

when women were offered advanced education and were provided daycare so that they could contribute to the workforce, few women held leadership positions or broke through the so-called glass ceiling (Merguerian, 2005; Zeitlian, 1995), and they were still expected to retain a position of submission with regard to men's decision-making power in the household (Medzorian, 2005).

Though the contested status of women prevails in both contemporary and traditional Armenian society, there is nevertheless a history of feminist literacy-based activity going back as far as 1862, which marked the first publication of the newspaper *Guitar* by Elbis Gesarartsian, an

Armenian woman living in Constantinople. This short-lived monthly paper, along with Marie Beylerian's *Artemis*, which appeared in 1901, both argued in favor of women's rights in the dominant patriarchal society. In the fiction realm, novelists Serpuhi Dussap and Zabel Assadur also focused on women's status (Merguerian, 2005), and the former is regularly hailed as "a pioneer of feminism among the Armenians" (Simonian Kalaidjian, 2000, pp. 177-8). One common trend among many of these figures is the discrepancy inherent in the prevailing attitude of mother-worship; that is, though publications worked in one direction to strengthen and empower the status of women in Armenian society, the woman was nevertheless consistently equated with motherhood, again leaving few if any options for assuming any other place in the social hierarchy (Zeitlian, 2000). With this in mind, it is of no small consequence that all of this study's participants are mothers themselves, as "first generation immigrant women" are regularly identified as "keepers of the Armenian legacy" (Bamberger, 2000, p. 22). Understanding the data the participants provide in the primary research with regard to the roles of mothers as legacy-keepers, especially through an analysis of their use of language and literacy, further adds more modern stories to what this body of literature has historically attested to.

This same body of literature also includes a smattering of pieces focused on narrative and autobiography couched in critical perspectives, like my study. For example, Boornazian (2005) wrote about the general value that story has in bridging experience and academic discussion, noting that stories "provide us with a walk-around memory" (p. 162) that would otherwise, non-ambulatory, go unheard. In addition, Avakian (1995; 2000) conducted research focusing on the narratives of women who self-identify as Armenian-American, herself included; she wrote of breaking silences in the community (Avakian, 1995) by using in-depth interviews in an attempt to fill the hole she found — the silent space where Armenian-American women's voices should

have been — when she commenced research on shared and novel experiences of Armenian-American women. When Merguerian (1995) asked her participants to write their autobiographies comparing writing to traditional female arts such as sewing and lacework, she found that the mere act of reflecting on their own lives helped her participants to "[reject] cultural ideologies of gender and cultural expectations for the patterns of women's lives" (p. 108). As her participants wrote their stories, they inscribed themselves "into presence in a world which would have otherwise recorded nothing but [their] absence" metaphorically removing the black kerchief that previously symbolized their silence (pp. 110-111). As with the stories of other oppressed populations, Armenian women have historically been written *about*, while being discouraged from telling their own stories or giving meaning to their own lives (Merguerian, 1995), and my work, like Merguerian's, also aims to remedy that lack of involvement by women in the telling of their own stories.

Keshgegian's work (1995; 2000) is particularly interesting, and it has included both analysis of published women's stories and original story-focused research to assert the value of critical perspectives in challenging, rather than reinforcing, "those social arrangements which deter women's full well-being and [which] inhibit women's empowerment and liberation" (Keshgegian, 2000, p. 50). With regard to the analysis of stories already on record, she has used critical perspectives to assert that uncritically adopting narrative frameworks that ignore issues of gender leads to stories that are unnecessarily incomplete, lacking the depth needed to negotiate "the dynamics of power [which] are, in reality, more complex [for] women in male-dominated societies" (Keshgegian, 2000, pp. 61-2). In her original narrative research focusing on genocide survivors and their descendants, she has further worked to question dominant analytical frameworks. She wrote specifically of

the call for a critical political consciousness… in order to understand the ways in which

portrayals of Armenian women have been used to serve certain interests and maintain

social arrangements which uphold Armenian society as patriarchal and which do not

conflict with the dominant American culture. Claims to women's agency and power are

resistant readings in both cultures, which go against the grain of cultural expectations.

They are subversive. (Keshgegian, 2000, pp. 182-183)

I have definitely aimed to answer her "call for a critical political consciousness" with the work

involved in this dissertation by investigating, among other phenomena, how the women in my

study claim agency and power through their narratives of multiple languages and literacies, a

claim which relates to this study's second research question regarding insights into how the

narratives illustrate intersections of language, culture, and gender.

On a final note in this brief discussion of some of the narrative work that has been

undertaken in Armenian Studies, it is crucial to understand that in the English-language literature

of most of the 20th century, the term *narrative* in Armenian Studies nearly exclusively referred to

narratives of the genocide. These have included narratives written by survivors of the Genocide

(e.g., Kalajian and Hagopian Taft, cited in Keshgegian, 2000; and Mardiganian, cited in

Balakian, 2003), as well as those written by Americans and British supporters who were part of

the immediate Genocide relief efforts. Balakian (2003) also mentioned numerous narratives of

"atrocity" written by relief workers (p. 242), which were "often eloquent in their clean language

and clinical images" (p. 225). Genocide-related narratives have also included what narrative

researchers often call *master narratives*, especially official reports that include watered-down,

fabricated "governing narratives" written and adopted by the Turkish government in the

continuing quest to deny the genocide (Balakian, 2003, p. 380). While my dissertation does not

directly relate to this type of Genocide-focused narrative, I have no reservations about declaring

my hope that the narratives herein shed light on other elements of the Armenian woman's

existence besides her collective legacy of trauma and victimization, characterized most strongly

by the Genocide, though these themes may also organically occur.

<center>**Background: Multilingual Studies**</center>

Echoing Rothman and Nino-Murcia (2008) and Kemp (2009), the initial order of

business when discussing an overview of multilingual studies is to clearly identify how the term

multilingual is used and defined, especially in the face of a growing body of competing

terminology and definitions. This section will address these competing definitions in the

literature, on the way to understanding how this dissertation situates itself in the field of

multilingual studies, after which I will present a general overview of some of the most pertinent

issues that have been addressed in recent multilingual studies research.

Defining *Multilingualism*

The term *multilingualism*, in some camps, is used in contrast with *monolingualism* and

without use of or reliance on the intermediary term *bilingualism*. For example, Wei (2008)

described a multilingual individual as "anyone who can communicate in more than language, be

it active (through speaking and writing) or passive (through listening and reading)" (p. 4), and

Franceschini (2008) used the term *multilingualism* to refer to any level of engagement "on a

regular basis… with more than one language in everyday life" (p. 33). Under this type of

conceptualization, someone who speaks two and only two languages, who would have

traditionally been called *bilingual* (cf. Burck, 2005) is referred to as *multilingual*, and the same

term would apply to any individual who speaks more than a single language. Other scholars,

rather than using the *monolingual/multilingual* pair, rely on the term *bilingualism* to represent the

<center>34</center>

use of anything more than a single language, such that a person who speaks/uses two languages and a person who speaks/uses five languages could both be called bilingual. For example, Pavlenko (2003) used the term *bilingual* to refer to "people who use more than one language for particular purposes at some points in their lives" (as cited in Solé, 2004, p. 231); similarly, Hornberger's (2003) continua of biliteracy framework does not limit the *bi-* to writing in only two languages but rather uses *biliteracy* to refer to "the use of two *or more* languages in and around writing" (p. xii, emphasis added). What is at issue, then, in each of the above cases is the distinction between monolingualism and something-more-than monolingualism, a basic distinction which, as in the case with Language Socialization studies, does not aim to clearly demarcate bilingualism from multilingualism (Baquedano-Lopez & Kattan, 2009).

Still, some scholars maintain a distinction between bilingualism and multilingualism, with the former referring to two and only two languages, and the latter used specifically to identify knowledge or use of more than two languages (McArthur 1992, as cited in Kemp, 2009; see also Todeva & Cenoz, 2009). Because these terms often have overlapping referents depending on the literature reviewed, I will differentiate bilingualism from multilingualism in the remainder of this literature review to the extent that the research also makes such differentiations. However, I plan to uphold the bilingualism/multilingualism distinction in my study, for the very practical reason that my multilingual participants are women who speak and use more than two languages on a regular basis.

Now, this "regular basis" deserves some attention, as it is also entrenched in debates about what does or does not count as bi- or multilingualism. Though older research paradigms may have granted bi-/multilingual status only to an individual able to produce and understand additional languages at a so-called native speaker level, more recent definitions have rightfully

questioned what this level entails and how it realistically figures into a description of bi-/ multilingual individuals and communities. Indeed, the current consensus is that one need not have "perfect" or "native speaker" proficiency in order to be considered bi- or multilingual (e.g., Blommaert, Collins, & Slembrouck, 2005; Franceschini, 2008; Kemp, 2009). The issue of mastery of the additional language is no longer the focus of determining multilingualism; after all, the topic of what counts as mastery is even more contentious than is the topic of what to call that mastery in its varying stages of achievement. Therefore, when I refer to my participants as multilingual, I am, as indicated above, referring to the number of languages they speak; in adding the descriptor *multiliterate,* I am also referring to their ability to interact in both spoken and written versions of their additional languages, with other speakers and texts of those languages, with some degree of comfort and independence, not reliant on a native speaker standard.

Issues in Bi-/Multilingual Studies Research

Understanding the varying meanings that the literature has provided for both *bi-* and *multilingualism*, it is helpful to identify a few prominent issues that have appeared under the proverbial research microscopes. These are addressed in differing amounts of detail, depending on how they intersect with the use of language and literacy histories as research data, in the last section of this chapter. One topic involves the combination of multilingual studies with literacy research, fields which originally had "somewhat different intellectual histories with distinct theoretical framings and methodological approaches" (Barton, 2000, pp. xxiii). This combined area of study saw significant growth in the mid-1990s (Martin-Jones & Jones, 2000) and my study, investigating the language and literacy histories of my multilingual participants, helps to continue that line of research. A second current issue in bi- and multilingual studies research deals with overarching questions about language choice among bi- and multilingual speakers,

and how language choice affects and is affected by speakers' multi-faceted identities (e.g., Burck, 2005; Solé, 2004). This topic criss-crosses quite fortuitously with the Armenian proverb introduced earlier in the chapter, which translates roughly to "As many languages as you know, that's how many people you are" (Kricorian, 2005, p. 212), and my research questions, which investigate past and present experiences with languages and literacies on the way to understanding how those experiences interrelate with elements of the participants' culture and gender, fit nicely here as well. A third topic that has received growing amounts of attention in multilingual studies has to do with the connections between multilingualism and emotions (Todeva & Cenoz, 2009), including speakers' emotional reactions to their subsequent languages (e.g., Pavlenko, 2005; Vitanova, 2004) and how speakers express emotions differently across different languages (e.g., Espin, 1997; Kowalski, 2009). Though I have not chosen to focus my research questions a priori on the connections between my participants' languages and emotions, previous research provides examples of how it authentically emerges from the data as a topic of discussion.

Background: Language and Literacy Histories as Research Data

Just as it is crucial to clearly understand the different uses and alternatives for the term *multilingual* in the research literature, it is prudent to begin this section with an overview of nomenclature for what I am referring to here as *language and literacy histories*. Across the realm of narrative research, participants' personal stories have been often referred to as biography, autobiography, and life history (Flowerdew & Miller, 2008). Before advances in poststructural and critical theory, one common type of personal narrative was the "traditional literacy narrative" a researcher- and teacher-driven narrative that presented a story "in which literacy literally lifts people into a new and more productive way of living in and seeing the world"

(Branch, 1998, p. 208). This type of literacy narrative served to cement the so-called *Great Divide* theory (Goody, 1977; Ong, 1982) by erroneously ascribing advanced cognitive functioning to the processes involved with literacy; such narratives have been, with good reason, viewed skeptically among critical researchers since Scribner and Cole (1981).

Additional terms abound in the literature. These include *literacy story*, the plot of which describes the acquisition of either spoken or written language (Soliday, 1994). Other terms employing *literacy* as a descriptor expressly emphasize the participants' acquisition of and relationship with text, including *literacy history*, "defined loosely as an account of an individual's relationship with different literacies from early childhood onwards upon which the present is built" (Barton, 1994, as cited in Stein, 1998, p. 519), and *literacy autobiography*, which may focus on general literacy or specific aspects of it, such as reading (e.g., Belzer, 2002) or writing (e.g., Steinman, 2007). Furthermore, there are several terms for autobiographies that are analyzed to highlight critical issues of power, struggle, and repression, such as *testimonio* (Tierney, 2000), *situational autobiography* (Pierce & Brisk, 2002), *critical autobiography* (Benesch, 1993, as cited in Pierce & Brisk, 2002), and *decolonized autobiography* (Spivak, 1996, as cited in Maan, 2007). More recent literature has adopted the term *linguistic autobiography* (e.g., Pavlenko, 2008b) to refer to participant-driven stories that convey both factual details and personal reflections about language-learning trajectories. Park (2008; 2011) expanded this to *cultural and linguistic autobiography*, a name which highlights the connections between cultural and linguistic identity.

With all of these existing choices for what to name the type of data I am collecting, I have chosen the term *language and literacy histories* for a couple of explicit reasons: (1) to acknowledge that language and literacy development, while often converging, may also diverge,

such that a description of one may not always suffice for a description of the other; and (2) to convey the story as a *history* rather than an *autobiography*, mainly to address the reality that the stories are co-constructions between the participants and me as the researcher, and not solely created by the *auto*-self of the individual participants.

Studying Language and Literacy Histories: Who Benefits?

Since my study is situated in critical and feminist perspectives, I see one necessary element of a thorough literature review as understanding who has benefitted from past research. Scholars employing language and literacy histories as data, under any one of the bevy of names addressed above, have specified a number of reasons why such research is a valuable contribution to the literature, in addition to naming a few distinct beneficiaries of it. These include gains in both the research and teaching realm, with benefits accruing to both the researchers/teachers and the participants/students. While there is some overlap among these categories, it is possible to fuzzily demarcate them, as I do below.

Benefits to research. Aneta Pavlenko, perhaps the most prolific contemporary scholar to employ language and literacy histories as data, has written widely on what these histories uniquely contribute to research in applied linguistics (e.g., Pavlenko, 2002; Pavlenko, 2007). For one, autobiographic narratives provide an eye "into people's private worlds, inaccessible to experimental methodologies, and thus provide the insider's view of the processes of language learning, attrition, and use" (Pavlenko, 2007, p. 164). These insiders' views can unearth otherwise unforeseen links between learning processes and phenomena, and they can also serve as "a valuable information source for historic and diachronic sociolinguistic research where other sources are scarce" (Nekvapil 2003, as cited in Pavlenko, 2007, pp.164-165). Other scholars have similarly highlighted how autobiographical narratives provide insights into the general

nature of "bilingualness" (Li, 2007, p. 273). From this type of data, researchers can glimpse details that might help explain individual differences in second/subsequent language acquisition (Langman, 2004), including differences in attitudes toward language and language learning (Yelenevskaya & Fialkova, 2003). Most significantly, researchers have used language and literacy histories as data to help them understand connections between language on one hand, and identity on the other (e.g., Dewaele, 2009; Langman, 2004; cf. Solé, 2004), and to help unravel and examine some of the uneven power relationships that exist between language researchers and the participants telling the stories upon which analyses are based (Todeva & Cenoz, 2009).

Benefits to educators. While language and literacy histories provide valuable data to researchers, the same prompts and questions associated with research interview protocols can also be incorporated into classroom assignments. Equipped with the information gleaned from student histories, educators develop greater understandings of students' "perspectives on a variety of complex social and educational issues" (Menard-Warwick, 2004, p. 308; cf. Menard-Warwick, 2007). Reading these autobiographies can help teachers grasp details about their students' past experiences with education and language learning, which can lead to more effective assessment of needs and progress (Pierce & Brisk, 2002). Critical educators can then use this personal information to help guide their instructional choices, rather than relying exclusively or heavily on predetermined curriculum (Pierce & Brisk, 2002; Menard-Warwick, 2004). Ultimately, as teachers learn about student experiences with language learning and migration (as in Park, 2008), and how these are impacted by issues such as gender and socioeconomic status (as in Menard-Warwick, 2004; 2007), they help create options for

transformative pedagogy that responds to student experiences by using them to scaffold bridges to new learning (Smith, 2004).

Benefits to research participants and students. Researchers have consistently remarked upon the value of language and literacy histories to scholars and educators, but of potentially greater value is the impact they can have on the individual writers of those histories. The literature focuses regularly and pointedly on benefits to student writers of autobiographies, and I pursue this type of research believing that the same advantages can accrue to research participants engaged in autobiographical enterprise. For instance, on a practical learning level, having the meaningful topic of oneself to write about presents opportunities for improving language proficiency (Park 2010; Simpson, 2011), opportunities which can then translate into academic confidence (Park, 2011). Given the chance to reflect on how they have developed linguistically, they then have a deeper understanding of themselves as learners (Smith, 2004) and, for many, as minorities and immigrants in the United States (Park, 2011). By far the most commonly identified benefit of this type of project on students — and potentially, by extension, research participants — is its transformative potential. In this regard, some oft-cited functions that autobiography has the capacity to accomplish are *validation* (e.g., Park, 2008; Park 2010; Stein, 1998) and *legitimation* (Park 2010; Tett & Crowther, 1998; Giroux, 1987, as cited in Willis, 2002) of the writers' lived experiences, *empowerment* of the writers (Hirvela, 1999, as cited in Rose, 2004; Pavlenko, 2002), *agency* (Pavlenko, 2007), *ownership* (Smith, 2004), and *voice* (Pavlenko, 2007; Giroux, 1987, as cited in Willis, 2002; Tett & Crowther, 1998; Stein, 1998). The latter idea, about unsilencing muted voices, is also particularly prominent in Merguerian's (1995) work in Armenian women's studies, as she has written about the transfiguring effects of autobiography on one of her participants:

[P]utting pen to paper and writing her own life she challenges silence, the culturally

imposed ideology of the female gender. I would argue that this insistence on the right to

speak for herself is at once a feminist and a political act. Both within and outside the

Armenian community, the woman autobiographer removes the black kerchief

[traditionally worn by married women until they bear their first child]. (p. 109)

Along that same line, as mentioned in the first section of this chapter, Merguerian (1995) goes on

to describe how, for her participant, the act of writing her autobiography "is literally to inscribe

herself into presence in a world which would otherwise have recorded nothing but her absence"

(pp. 110-111).

Powerful benefits, indeed. I make no qualms about explicitly hoping that similar benefits

to the participants have emerged from this dissertation as well.

Language and Literacy Histories: Lessons to Learn From Past Research

Beyond understanding what good can come from research with language and literacy

histories, the literature provides a number of cautions to heed about doing this type of research.

The first has to do with the nature of what is ultimately constructed as the participant's

autobiography, in that what we as researchers analyze is itself an *interpretation*, not a

representation, of the participant's reality (Pavlenko, 2008b; cf. Gao, 2010; Burck, 2005). We

must make it a priority to see the contexts of the story, which include the context surrounding the

experiences being retold as well as the context surrounding the act of the retelling. We must

remember that "autobiographies are necessarily selective, partial, and shaped by perceptions of

appropriateness," (Menard-Warwick, 2004, p. 308) and that bi-/multilingual autobiographies

may be additionally constrained depending on the participants' and researchers' facility with

each other's languages (Pavlenko, 2002; Pavlenko, 2008b). Care must be taken in selecting

portions of the data for analysis, as an over-emphasis on theme generation can detract from the story itself, leading to "fragmentation and depersonalization" of the stories and their narrators (Liversage, 2009). This is similar to Pavlenko's (2002; 2007; 2008b) warnings against analysis that centers exclusively on content, at the expense of the other factors that determine narrative. Explaining further, she stated, "content cannot be analyzed in separation from context and form, and that thematization is a preliminary analytical step and cannot be confused with analysis" (Pavlenko, 2007, p. 167). In other words, narrative analysis of autobiographic data must go beyond mere summaries interspersed with evidentiary quotes. It must incorporate participants' views while going beyond them, and we must also work to understand omissions in the stories as we develop analyses of what has been included in them (Pavlenko, 2007; Pavlenko, 2008b).

Scholarship in Bi-/Multilingual Studies: Focus on Language and Literacy Histories

The purpose of this final section is to present an overview of what has already been done, under what theoretical underpinnings, and with what results. Starting with a variety of possible search terms — e.g., *bilingual, multilingual*, and their respective -*ism*s; *narrative*, *autobiography*, *biography*, *history*, coupled with narrowing adjectives such as *linguistic* and *literacy* — produced a rather substantial body of sources to review. Before putting forth the gist of the research questions, theoretical frameworks, and pertinent findings from these studies, I will note one fact: among all of the existing research, none has delved directly and purposefully into the literacy histories and practices of Armenian immigrant women. The current study thus adds novel ingredients to the thriving recipe already in progress, which I synthesize below.

Research Questions

The research questions addressed in this type of work are not homogenous, but it is clear that autobiographic data is suited for answering particular types of questions. By far, the most

common type of research question addressed in this type of research involves some degree of inquiry into bi-/multilingual language learner/speaker identity. For instance, many studies focus on bi-/multilingual pre-service and in-service teachers engaged in autobiography, and how they construct their emerging and existing teacher identities (Lin, Wang, Akamatsu, & Riazi, 2002; Rodriguez & Cho, 2011). Even more studies aim to answer more general questions about how bi-/multilingual research participants perceive particular elements of their identity, be they linguistic (Burck, 2005; Bustamante-Lopez, 2008; Pavlenko, 2001a), gendered (Menard-Warwick, 2007; Pavlenko, Blackledge, Piller, & Teutsch-Dwyer, 2001; Skapoulli, 2004; Vitanova, 2004), academic (Englander, 2009), cultural (Sanchez, 2007) migration related (Barkhuizen & de Klerk, 2006; King & Ganuza, 2005), technology related (Simpson, 2011) or a combination of multiple factors (e.g., Carroll, Motha, & Price, 2008; Solé, 2004).

Some examples of other types of questions that have been examined in autobiographic applied linguistics research include (1) how bi-/multilinguals make choices about which of their languages and literacies to use (Scribner & Cole, 1981), (2) what attitudes bi-/multilinguals have toward their different languages (Bangeni & Kapp, 2007; Vaish, 2008), (3) how different contexts of learning English affect subsequent experiences as English teachers (Lin, Wang, Akamatsu, & Riazi, 2002), (4) what learner narratives can tell researchers about the nature of motivation and other factors on individual language learning (Gao, 2010), (5) how language awareness is mobilized among formerly monolingual adults in new situations requiring multilingualism (Yelenevskaya & Fialkova, 2003), and (6) what types of literacy practices are involved among multilingual students learning in traditionally monolingual settings (Kelly, Gregory, & Williams, 2001).

Theoretical Frameworks

      Not all of the studies reviewed here made specific reference to overarching theoretical

frameworks guiding the researchers' work, an omission which Pavlenko (2007) has warned

against when conducting research with this type of data. Of the studies which identified

underlying frameworks, nearly all made mention of issues pertinent to researchers working from

critical perspectives that prioritize sensitivity to the needs, experiences, and identities of learners

and research participants. These include frameworks that specifically address assymetrical

relations of power, as in Martin-Jones's (2000) work on the language and literacy practices of

Gujarati women in England and in Tett and Crowther's (1998) examination of the discriminatory

nature of dominant literacy practices in school settings, as well as Flowerdew and Miller's

(2008) work based in Bourdieu's ideas on cultural and linguistic capital. Pavlenko (2007)

presented a thorough historical background on autobiographical research that employed a

poststructural lens and that addressed contextual factors affecting how learners and participants

are positioned by others and position themselves; her review also referenced her own studies

situated in poststructuralist approaches (e.g., Pavlenko, 2001a). My review further found many

studies with such a focus, including Shi's (2003) work on the fluid nature of academic identity

and Vitanova's (2004) work based in critical perspectives on gender and subjectivity. Similarly,

Solé (2004) used poststructuralism as well as Pennycook's notion of "identity repertoires" to

ground her study, while Barkhuizen and de Klerk (2006) and Bangeni and Kapp (2007) situated

their studies within Norton's (1995, as Norton Peirce; 1997; 2000) framework of identity and

investment. Lanza's (2008) framework, though not directly named, discussed the importance of

acknowledging researcher influence and positioning on how research is carried out, an

acknowledgement that also takes precedence in feminist communitarian ethics, the theoretical

umbrella under which this current study is situated. Positioning theory (Barkhuizen, 2010), discursive positioning (Pavlenko, 2003), black feminist thought (Willis, 2002), communities of practice (Skapoulli, 2004), multilingual spaces (Ferriera & Mendelowitz, 2009), and constructivist approaches (Steinman, 2007; Yi, 2009) round out the types of frameworks employed in the literature surveyed here.

Salient Interpretive Themes

Multilingual studies research employing language and literacy histories as data has seen a number of recurring themes, especially with regard to connections between language and identity. Prominently highlighted in past research as well as the current study are issues of cultural/immigrant and gender identity, and these findings are addressed more specifically below. Many studies also echo one another in that participants have often revealed that the construction of their language and literacy histories made them realize that they had never before been asked about those particular experiences or prioritized reflection upon them (Burck, 2005; Nagle, 1999; Steinman, 2007). The act of reflecting on and constructing these histories has also led to heightened self-awareness of their own language use and choice (Boix-Fuster & Sanz, 2008), and the sense that they were not alone in their struggles to adapt to life in new cultures and languages (Pierce & Brisk, 2002).

Language, language choice, and identity. Since Norton's (1995 as Norton Peirce; 1997; 2000) landmark publications, researchers in bi-/multilingual studies have continued sustained inquiry into connections between language and identity. Multilingual speakers, especially immigrants moving to places with dominant languages that their home countries do not share, may initially adopt new languages as a means of surviving and interacting in new environments. However, "[f]or the multilingual speaker, language choice is not only an effective means of

communication but also an act of identity" (Wei, 2008, p. 13). The identities under the microscope may result from reflective positioning — how identity is represented by oneself — or from interactive positioning — how identity is represented by others (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2001; 2004; cf. Wei, 2008), or some combination of the two. Pavlenko (2001a) also identified several categories useful for breaking down the study of identity, either by focusing on these categories individually or by investigating intersections; these categories, which Pavlenko acknowledged were not necessarily all-inclusive, included racial, national, ethnic, cultural, gender, class, social, religious, and sexual identities. Similarly, Solé (2004), springboarding off of Leung, Harris, and Rampton (1997), broke the study of linguistic identity into three potentially useful categories, including language expertise, or speakers' ability and facility with their different languages; language affiliation, or speakers' affective relationships with/to their respective languages; and language inheritance, or the connection(s) between the speakers' languages and the ethnic group they were born into. Each of these categories provided helpful parameters for constructing interview protocols and conducting data analysis for the current study.

Researchers using participant-focused language and literacy histories as data have regularly situated their work within critical and poststructural perspectives, so it is not surprising that these researchers have consistently found that participants constructed multiple and fluid identities through their uses of multiple languages (e.g., Bustamante-Lopez, 2008; Rothman & Nino-Murcia, 2008). This multiplicity has been characterized by participants as ultimately advantageous (Burck, 2005), though not without conflict. For example, South African participants studying and learning English in Bangeni and Kapp's (2007) study expressed feelings of defensiveness and anxiety about losing elements of their core ethnic identities, a

significant threat as they took on additional English-speaking identities in their multilingually

diverse environments. Likewise, Burck (2005) found that some of her participants struggled with

and even resisted adopting the new identities associated with speaking English as an additional

language, never accepting English as a language that they "owned" or could call their own. As a

result, she concluded that "[i]ndividuals' connection to language and positioning in it is crucially

linked to the meanings given to languages" (p. 85).

Recognizing the same type of resistance toward ownership of English as an additional

language, Vaish (2008) further complexified the language and identity connection in her study of

economically disadvantaged Hindi-English bilingual women studying in a higher education

setting in India. Analyzing written interview data from this study, Vaish (2008) differentiated

"identity" in a home language, tied closely to his/her participants' religious and cultural selves,

from a more superficial "personality" in English, something that was required instrumentally for

success in higher education and the workplace (p. 198) but was resisted and not deemed an

integral part of their national, religious, or cultural identities. This idea, that adding a language to

one's linguistic repertoire creates a new personality or identity in the speaker, is mirrored across

studies that use language and literacy histories as data (e.g., Burck, 2005; Koven, 2004; Temple,

2008). This finding is even more interesting in the context of the current study since it echoes the

Armenian proverb that "For every language you know, you become another person"

(Manoogian, 2000, p. 309).

Immigrant and gender identity. Many studies using language and literacy histories as

data have been useful for describing and analyzing ways that research participants perceive

themselves and construct their identities with regard to their lives as immigrants and as gendered

beings. Some studies, addressed in the two following sections, have focused on these categories

separately, whereas other studies have looked at how these categories intertwine. The focus on that connection is most salient in the work of Julia Menard-Warwick (2004; 2007; 2009), who has written that "[i]n autobiographies, immigrant women themselves make clear that [second or subsequent] language and literacy development is intimately tied to their gender-mediated struggles to meet their personal goals in a new land" (Menard-Warwick, 2004, p. 297). Analyzing autobiography as data, Menard-Warwick (2004) concurred with other work (e.g., Ehrlich, 1997; Rockhill, 1993) in the conclusion that her participants' second language learning was mediated by their communities' view of gender identities and gender relations, such that the learning and gender responsibilities could not really be separated; however, her study went a step further, identifying the more important mediator as "the way that individuals *respond* to the gendered expectations that are placed on them by their families and communities" (Menard-Warwick, 2004, p. 304, emphasis in original). Another of her related studies used a narrative, this one from a participant explaining her family's reaction to her younger sister's unmarried pregnancy, to illustrate contradictions in the participant's ideology of gender, expressed as a result of telling this story; the analysis further addressed how the participant's ongoing construction of female identity, and what it meant in her family to be a "good girl", intersected with conflicting gender ideologies she experienced in the United States and her home country of Mexico (Menard-Warwick, 2007, p. 281). Though the latter analysis did not specifically address linguistic identity as it interacted with facets of gender and immigrant identity, it nevertheless presented an example of a narrative analysis that was adequately and necessarily sensitive to these two concerns.

A number of studies have looked at ways that immigrant women living life in a new language are able, as a result of that new language, to assume more powerful roles than they

would otherwise be able to claim. For example, Solé (2004) analyzed constructions of gender in two previously published autobiographies of Chicana immigrants writing in English, concluding that the women under examination ultimately used their new language to acquire a new identity and thus escape from the dominated role they held in their home communities in Mexico. Important to mention here too is the seminal work by Norton (2000), which showed, among other things, how immigrant women living life in a new language were able to use that new language to assert stronger parts and suppress weaker parts of their identities to have their voices heard.

On the other hand, not all stories have these positive results, as some women upon immigration to life in a new language experience a narrowing rather than a broadening of identity options. On this note, Martin-Jones (2000) examined the language and literacy histories of two Gujarati-speaking women living in Britain, only to find that these multilingual, multiliterate women were regularly constructed as illiterate by the English-speaking community and thus deemed unfit to contribute to their children's literacy education. This did not stop them from contributing but added yet another obstacle in the way of their transitioning into their new setting. Other studies (Burck, 2005; Liversage, 2009) likewise highlight some of the ways that women's traditional roles in their home countries are retained upon immigration, such that they are expected to be guardians of the home culture and tradition. While this can potentially be seen as a positive and powerful role for women to fulfill, providing a great deal of influence over the young generation — recall images of Armenian women as exemplified by the guardian Mother Armenia earlier in this chapter — this role can also complicate and obliterate opportunities for immigrant women to learn the new language. This was indeed the case in Liversage's (2009) research, whose participants all felt that their gendered responsibilities in a country unfamiliar

with their home language would keep them from ever being able to "gain the linguistic means of becoming a full member of [their] new society" (p. 245).

Immigrant identity. For the purposes of this section, I use the term *immigrant* to refer to someone who has moved into a new country where the dominant community language is not the one spoken in her home. Recent literature on this topic has developed more specific terminology, such as *transnational*, to refer to people whose movement across national borders is not necessarily one-way (e.g., Sanchez, 2007; Warriner, 2007; Warriner, 2009; Yi, 2009). My definition here is a simplified one chosen to focus on movement and transition into life in a new language, an experience which people considered both *immigrants* and *transnationals* often share.

Understanding my use of this term, numerous past studies have investigated the interplay between language and immigrant identity. One quality that many of these studies share is their finding that immigrants who are engaged in learning or using a new dominant language often experience a type of double identity (e.g., Li, 2007; King & Ganuza, 2005; Solé, 2004), living in two languages and thus often also two cultures. The boundaries separating linguistic, cultural, and national identity are often fuzzy and overlapping, and it is not unusual for participants to construct identities that are "part 'insider', part 'outsider'" (King & Ganuza, 2005, p. 191), or hybrid identities, as Anzaldua (1999) described them. On a similar note, though older literature has employed terms such as *instrumental* and *sentimental* to describe the types of uses to which multilingual speakers may put their different languages, even the boundary between these domains is fuzzy, as King and Ganuza (2005) found in their study on Chilean, Spanish-speaking adolescent immigrants living in Sweden.

Viewing the literature as a source for how immigrant participants and autobiographers perceive this double or hybrid identity, the majority of studies using language and literacy histories as data conveyed stories of participants who, despite initial struggle and strife upon immigration to life in a new language, used the autobiographical act itself to reconcile facets of their dual identities and become empowered by their experiences and reflections. For example, writing about experiences of bi-/multilingual preservice teachers in the Midwestern United States and Hawaii, Rodriguez and Cho (2011) found that participants resisted potentially dehumanizing labels such as "minority" and "non-native" and were thus able to overcome metaphorical silence and "voice their experience and perspective as legitimate knowledge" (p. 503). Similarly, Park (2011), through a classroom-based cultural and linguistic autobiography project, described how adult student autobiographers viewed the project "as a form of empowerment and development of their sense of self, their emerging identities" (p. 167), coming away with more confidence in their abilities as writers as well as in their roles as community builders, parents, and speakers of English as an international language. Other pertinent studies discussed how bi-/multilingual immigrant participants who engaged in autobiographical work in the research or classroom setting reported having increased knowledge about the particularities of their first and subsequent languages (Steinman, 2007); how individuals reflecting on their experiences eventually reframed their disadvantages as assets that allowed them to claim rightful places in their new communities (Solé, 2004); and most of all, how immigrants constructing and reflecting on their autobiographies developed agency in and ownership of their new languages and communities (Lin, Wang, Akamatsu, & Riazi, 2002; Pavlenko, 2001a).

Gender identity. With regard to studies that combine language, multilingualism, and gender issues, it is important to note that the research on multilingualism and gender identity

often, though certainly not always, relies for data upon participants who are also immigrants. This is important to acknowledge because, while the gender and immigrant identity categories can be teased apart from one another — as I am briefly doing here — there is inevitable overlap, even in studies that purport to focus on a single facet of identity construction. As a result, while the studies described in this section focus specifically on gender issues, some aspects of immigrant identity may also arise secondarily in the studies.

On that note, just as language and literacy are usefully studied as sets of practices (e.g., Street, 2003), gender too is best understood as something that people *do* rather than something they *have* (Butler, 1990; Menard-Warwick, 2007; cf. Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2003). At the same time, the performative aspects of gender are also situated within various social ideologies of gender, or belief systems related to differential power relations within a social setting. As Menard-Warwick (2007) has explained and exemplified, "one key resource for performing particular gender identities is personal narrative" (p. 281). This connection between gender and language is reflexive, with gender both shaping and being shaped by linguistic practices (Skapoulli, 2004).

In the last two decades, many scholars have shed light upon this language-gender relationship. Some prominent studies have addressed details about language and gender in comparisons between male and female practices. For example, investigating how males and females addressed gender in personal narratives, Pavlenko (2001b) found that female narrators more consistently and consciously addressed gender issues in their stories of language learning and socialization. Vitanova (2004) undertook a comparison of men's and women's relative levels of linguistic expertise in English as an additional language, the analysis of which highlighted

how participants' gender related to how they described negative emotions they felt about their use of English, including vulnerability, nervousness, and shame.

More often than not, though, much of this research has both focused on and been written by women. This includes Menard-Warwick's body of work that addresses various issues pertaining to multilingual female immigrants engaged in learning English as an additional language. Like Menard-Warwick, Rockhill (1993) also looked closely at language learning experiences of Latina immigrants in California and concluded that "the situation of women with respect to literacy is defined by a pervasive male/female power dynamic, cross-cut by different constructions of masculinity and feminity" (p. 166). Rockhill (1993) also found that women relied more heavily on writing rather than speaking in their new language, which, she concluded, had "a great deal to do with the silencing of women, their confinement to the domestic sphere, and the structure of work available to them" (pp. 166-167). There are similar additional studies that have presented story-based evidence of gender-based inequality that pervades women's lives as they work toward success in living life in a new language. For instance, Alam (2000) found that her participants' gendered household and child-rearing responsibilities regularly interfered with their ability to learn English, to the extent that learning English was tolerated only when it served a larger purpose or function within the household. These findings support the widely-held notion that in patriarchal societies, gender silences women (e.g., Alemu, 2007; Norton, 2000).

Fortunately, though, the stories women tell in their language and literacy histories are not always so bleak, and for many, it is in the telling of those stories that they uncover a sense of agency and ownership of their new language. This was indeed the case for some of Norton's (2000) participants. Additionally, Sherrie Carroll, in her analysis of the written life histories of two of her ESL students, found that one student, whom she named Jennifer, used the writing of

her autobiography to "bolster her struggle and resistance" as she worked to gain agency against the "prescribed subordinated roles for women and social hierarchies" of her social setting (Carroll, Motha, & Price, 2008, p. 171).

Chapter Summary

I began this chapter with an introduction to Armenian and Armenian women's studies in order to provide background information for the many readers who may otherwise be unfamiliar with the community upon which this study focuses. I then presented background information on the field of multilingual studies and on the use of language and literacy histories as a source of data in applied linguistics research, helping to clarify some of the terminology and major issues that have arisen throughout the course of past work. In the last section, I presented an overview of findings within the bi-/multilingual studies research that has relied to a considerable extent on language and literacy histories to make analyses and reach conclusions. Though it is now not unusual to use this type of data when studying the experiences of multilingual individuals, the field has yet to see a study that focuses on the particular group of multilingual individuals that is highlighted in this study. This dissertation therefore makes a significant contribution to the growing fields of both multilingual studies and Armenian women's studies, and offers a novel and worthwhile intersection of the two bodies of research.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

With this dissertation, I aimed to learn more about the past and present language and literacy practices of my participants, four multilingual Armenian immigrant women. As a teacher engaged in Freirean pedagogy, I believe that understanding language and literacy practices helps provide an eye into the educational needs of this population that is so prevalent in the colleges where I am employed; as a critical and feminist researcher, I further believe that the telling of these stories can be a source of empowerment for the narrators, as well as a crucial source of information into the personal and social experiences of women whose voices have heretofore been suppressed. As a result, this narrative inquiry aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What are the participants' past and present experiences with living in multiple languages and literacies? In other words, what language and literacy history emerges from each participant's narratives?

2. What insights about the intersections of language, culture, and gender emerge from the narratives?

These questions are mighty packed, but they are answerable, and this chapter outlines how. In the following pages, I first present an overview of the critical and feminist epistemological lens through which I have undertaken this narrative inquiry. I then describe specifics about the context of the study, including the setting and participants, followed by a description of the data collection and analytical measures that I used to answer my research questions.

Qualitative Research: A Critical, Feminist Approach

This study is firmly rooted in critical and feminist approaches to research, approaches which serve as the epistemological lenses through I which I filter my participants' stories. One quality that both approaches share is a foregrounding of issues of power, with the latter approach focusing significantly on how gender and power relations are intertwined. Cannella and Lincoln (2009) explained the umbrella term *critical* well: "By critical perspectives, we mean any research that recognizes power — that seeks in its analyses to plumb the archaeology of taken-for-granted perspectives to understand how unjust and oppressive social conditions came to be reified as historical 'givens.'" (p. 54). Critical researchers share a concern with investigating social inequalities, with the intention of effecting positive change (Carspecken, 1996); as such, critical inquiry works not only to aim the spotlight on inequality but to somehow, however gradually, ameliorate that injustice (Lincoln & Denzin, 2005) and "help make [participants'] situations better than they were when we found them (Kambrelis & Dimitriadis, 2008, p. 99).

Make my participants' situations better? Better than what, exactly? After all, who am I to declare a population oppressed, to dare to assume that I would have the slightest idea how to judge a situation in need of ameliorating, to be so brash as to assume that I have the proverbial answers and am somehow able to fix problems of which my participants may be unaware, delicate newcomers that they are to this American way of life, justice, and equality? These questions, while admittedly presented here for rhetorical impact, are nevertheless crucial to critical inquiry, and they give form to another vital factor in critical research: that of reflexivity (Rogers, Malancharuvil-Berkes, Mosley, Hui, & Joseph, 2005). As a critical and reflexive researcher, I must turn the inquiry back upon itself — and upon myself — to help ensure that my efforts toward understanding my participants' experiences do not simply end up as another form

of oppression in disguise. This reflexivity takes place at all stages of the research process, such that, to address one of my rhetorical questions, I do not, as a criticalist, declare from on-high that my research population is oppressed because of their status as women from a traditionally patriarchal Armenian society. Rather, I ask questions to help determine how my participants declare themselves, and define their own experiences; this self-declaration and self-naming is yet another vital element in critical inquiry (Freire, 2001), and one which overlaps with feminist approaches. For example, Hill Collins (2000), addressing this topic and reflexively identifying herself within her philosophy on black feminist thought, wrote that when oppressed populations define themselves, they reject the assumption that people in positions of power are entitled to do that defining for them.

To summarize, critical inquiry focuses foremost on power relationships, with an emphasis on researcher reflexivity and participant self-definition. With regard to power relationships, critical researchers investigate what those relationships are, identify and seek to overtly name inequalities, and work with hope and purpose to dismantle those inequalities. For example, in this study, I want to understand power relations as the study's participants, multilingual and multiliterate Armenian immigrant women, experience them, by asking questions that help them to define those relations themselves. But this investigation into power relations does not stop there, as it also applies to the *method* of research: I must also ensure that in the course of the research act, I am conscious of my own position and how it may affect the process and outcomes of the research; I must reflexively apply my critical stance toward both the issues I am investigating and the manner in which I am investigating them.

Feminist and critical qualitative inquiry ultimately share these concerns with power relations, reflexivity, and self-definition, and in some cases separating these strands of research is

difficult and perhaps unnecessary. For example, though Naples (2003) stated that "a primary goal of feminist research is to uncover how inequality is reproduced and resisted" (p. 64), the same primary goal could be identified for critical research. Similarly, Donna Haraway, a paragon of feminist research, described feminist researchers as having

> stakes in a… project that offers a more adequate, richer, better account of a world, in order to live in it well and in critical, reflexive relation to our own as well as others' practices of domination and the unequal parts of privilege and oppression that make up all positions (Haraway, 2003, p. 25),

but the same has often been said of the stakes critical researchers have in their inquiries (e.g., Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Denzin, Lincoln, & Giardina, 2006; Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005). So what then, if anything, distinguishes feminist from critical inquiry, and what does that mean for the current endeavor that is this study?

It is helpful to look at feminist research from two angles, first by looking at the purposes researchers have for studying women, and then by examining the methods employed to undertake that study. From the former angle, feminist research aims to investigate women's experiences (Harding, 1987), especially highlighting when those experiences have led to or been the result of women's disenfranchisement and oppression (Cannella & Perez, 2009). Research undertaken within feminist theory, with women participants, also takes as a starting point that "the real world makes a material difference in terms of … gender" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 24), and often shares Chase's "desire to contribute to our understanding of how women make sense of their lives in an inequitable social world" (Chase, 1996, p. 49). From the latter angle, one shared trait of the various feminist methodologies (e.g., Denzin, 1997; Knight, 2000; Naples, 2003) is their characteristic goal "to establish collaborative and nonexploitative relationships"

(Creswell, 2007, p. 26) between the researcher and participants. This means that research is "conducted by, with, and for the participants in a study" (Knight, 2000, p. 173), thereby "challeng[ing] the conventional hierarchy of researcher and researched" (Chase, 1996, p. 49). Additionally, within feminist methodology, "many research projects begin with, or are part of, the researcher's life" (Balan, 2005, p. 3), and that personal connection, when divulged and incorporated into the research process and write-up, is considered a strength when evaluating the quality of the research.

Both angles, combined with critical perspectives and the characteristics of feminist communitarian ethics outlined in the first chapter, contribute to an understanding of how I have designed this research activity. I am studying the experiences of women who come from a traditionally patriarchal society; though I myself would describe it as oppressive, what matters are my participants' voices, their descriptions, and their self-definitions, all of which I intend for the remainder of this text to privilege. I believe their voices to be valuable contributions to social science research, in part expressly because, within their social hierarchy, they have not had ample space or opportunity to document their own experiences and thus have not been adequately heard. Unsilencing muted voices deals directly with an investigation into and an attempted dismantling of unequal power relationships. As a result, my study is both critical and feminist, and narrative inquiry is an ideal methodology for looking closely at the things that critical and feminist researchers aim to study; the next section explains this key connection.

Narrative Inquiry

> We are the storytelling species. Storytelling is in our blood. We think in story form, speak in story form, and bring meaning to our lives through story. Our life stories connect us to our roots, give us direction, validate our own experience, and restore value to our lives…

Everyone has a story to tell about his or her life, and they are indeed important stories. (Atkinson, 2007, p. 224)

Narrative inquiry, at its core, is about storytelling. Researchers engaged in narrative inquiry believe in the value of this storytelling as a way of understanding their participants, who themselves paint particular pictures of their lives that are then added to the story of human experience. I remember once my grandmother's response once to an obviously tall tale I told as a second grader about something I had done — or not done — at school one day. In this memory, I had some pictures in my backpack, mimeographs of a first-prize-winning drawing that had been distributed to everyone in the class. I did not create this prize-winning drawing, but when I told my grandmother that I had, she said, "Are you telling a story?" Of course what she meant was not "Are you relating an event that has a beginning, middle, and end?" but rather, "Are you telling a lie? Are you making this up? Are there parts of this event that you are fabricating?" Indeed, in narrative research, there is sometimes only the fuzziest of boundaries between these two meanings of *storytelling*.

With this in mind, narrative inquirers approach their task openly knowing, and regularly reminding themselves, that stories are always interpretations of events, rather than the mythical end-all, be-all, single solitary truth of a past event (Chase, 2005; Ochberg, 1996; cf. Pavlenko, 2008b). This is not to say that participants in narrative inquiry, like that second grader who wished desperately for an artistic talent that she simply did not have, are liars. They work with their memories to relate events in a temporally coherent manner, resting on the belief, conscious or not, that "human beings make sense of random experiences by the imposition of story structures on them" (Webster & Mertova, 2007, p. 3), and that "stories are a way of organizing experience, interpreting events, and creating meaning while maintaining a sense of continuity"

(Ben-Ari, 1995, p. 155). Because one of the guiding purposes of this study is to investigate my participants' languages and literacies, past and present, a narrative approach is appropriate — indeed, mandatory — for seeing the temporal connections between what the participants do now, and how this has developed from what they have done in the past. Moreover, in addition to understanding what they have done in the past and do presently, I want to understand what meanings my participants ascribe to these events, and what other underlying ideas or themes may emerge from the telling of their stories; this further solidifies the choice of narrative inquiry as the most appropriate method for answering the study's research questions.

Narrative analysis, then, goes beyond the re-construction of past events into a relatively coherent whole; the point, or the main one at least, is for both the researcher and the participant to understand the narrative temporally and spatially, personally and socially (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), and to make sense of it. Josselson (1995) described narratives not as "records of facts, of how things actually were, but of a meaning-making system that makes sense out of the chaotic mass of perceptions and experiences of a life… an excursion into reframing a story in search of life plots that better serve the individual in the present" (p. 33). This description also helps get at one of the purposes of narrative research: Beyond the new understandings of human experience it affords researchers, narrative research benefits the individual narrator. This is one of the reasons why this type of research methodology goes hand in hand with critical and feminist perspectives.

Critical and Feminist Narrative Inquiry

The pairing of narrative research with critical epistemologies is quite common (Hollingsworth & Dybdahl, 2007). While descriptions of critical epistemologies embrace numerous qualities to deem something *critical*, I summarized above that critical research

involves three major characteristics: investigating and dismantling power relationships, researcher reflexivity, and participant self-definition. Chase (2005) wrote that "giving voice to marginalized people and naming silenced lives" have been primary goals of narrative research for several decades" (p. 668), and both of these goals actively confront unequal power relations that may exist in participants' social worlds. Narrative research is also inherently reflexive, with write-ups regularly including "the researcher's own narrative of experience the researcher's autobiography. This task of composing our own narratives of experience is central to narrative inquiry" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 70). Narrative inquiry, with its focus on "recovering the voices and social experiences of silenced… and marginalized groups" further contributes to an effort to have members of these groups engage in self-definition, self-naming, and validating of one's own experience (Stein, 1998, p. 523). When narrative research is carried out with these emphases in mind, it is indeed critical research.

Narrative research is also an ideal type of inquiry for researchers working within feminist frameworks. I will put forth that narrative research is feminist when the voices that are unmuted are voices of women, and when their stories describe gendered experiences, or ways that gender has influenced the events of their daily lives. When the construction of these stories by the researcher is done for the explicit sake of shedding light on these gendered, often inequitable experiences, this narrative research is feminist.

Recalling the earlier discussion of feminist methodologies, it is also possible to connect narrative methodology to feminist methodology. In that feminist epistemologies place great value on "experience as knowledge" (Hollingsworth & Dybdahl, 2007, p. 149), narrative research is — or at least can be — feminist. More importantly, though, is the nature of the researcher-participant relationship, which in narrative inquiry is collaborative, respectful, and

compassionate (Atkinson, 1998; Josselson, 2007), much like the relationship that develops in other feminist methodologies. While feminist work also often highlights ways that women act as agents of change to interrupt the patriarchal status quo, the voices of women who in fact do *not* actively resist traditional roles are still worthy of being heard; in a feminist context that amplifies resistant voices, the stories of women who embrace conventional, less empowered roles may be at further risk of being muted. With this warning in mind, this study does indeed seek to identify instances of how the participants have acted and act as agents of change, while respecting the fact that all of the women might not be as equally keen on waving the feminist flag.

What We Do When We Do Narrative Research

The data collection and analysis measures undertaken in this study are addressed in a later section, but it is helpful to briefly clarify what narrative research looks for, and what its central components tend to be. In co-constructing participant narratives from data sources, we can see traditional elements of story, like beginning, middle, and end. It is often this middle part that contains the meat of the story, the events that achieve coherence and sense-making in the telling. Perhaps this is why Atkinson (1997; 2007) refers to this middle as the *muddle*, what I first thought was a typo for that middle, messy, fuzzy, part of stories in need of resolutions. Somewhere within the middle/muddle is often a turning point, critical event, or epiphany (Denzin, 1989; Flowerdew, 1999; Webster & Mertova, 2007) that led the teller to some type of change or realization, depending on the type of story that is elicited by the researcher or in the researcher-participant discussion. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) further conceived of a conceptual tool for narrative analysis that they called

> a metaphorical *three-dimensional narrative inquiry space*, with temporality along one
>
> dimension, the personal and social along a second dimension, and place along a third…

Any particular inquiry is defined by this three-dimensional space: studies have temporal

dimension and address temporal matters; they focus on the personal and social in a

balance appropriate for the inquiry; and they occur in specific places or sequences of

places. (p. 50)

They further explained that, within the three-dimensional space, inquiry can move in any of four

directions: inward, which addresses internal emotions of the narrator; outward, dealing with

external factors; backward, toward the past; and forward, toward the future (Clandinin &

Connelly, 2000). It is along these dimensions and in these directions that I looked carefully as I

sought to understand the narratives of my participants.

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Trusting Critical, Feminist, Narrative Research: Ethics and Authenticity

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Like critical and feminist epistemologies, narrative methodology also places prime

importance on the ethics of the research endeavor; in the same way that many statements about

critical inquiry also may apply to feminist inquiry, many statements about narrative inquiry in

general also mirror the discussion on ethics in critical and feminist research. Though I am

including this separate section on ethics because it is remarkably important for the kind of work I

aim to do, I hope that my ethical stance has been made clear prior to this small section of this

study. That said, there are some additional points to make on this topic.

Ethics

To varying degrees, critical, feminist, and narrative research prioritize the same

fundamental ethical quality: collaboration. For example, within Feminist Communitarian Ethics

(FCE), introduced in chapter one as the specific theoretical lens through which I have designed

this study, of utmost importance is the collaborative relationship between the researcher and the

participants (Christians, 2003; Denzin, 2005; Fontana & Frey, 2005). Narrative too sees the

benefit of constant inclusion of participants in the research process (Atkinson, 1998, 2007; Craig & Huber, 2007; Hollingsworth & Dybdahl, 2007), and "it is this type of procedure and discourse between participants and researcher that is most vital for the narrative to succeed" (Coulter, Michael, & Poynor, 2007, p. 108). Critical perspectives likewise value mutuality within the research relationship, going back at least as far as Freire's insistence on "involving, as partners in the research process, the people he studied as subjects" (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005, p. 305). In addition to the shared power dynamic, some feminist methodologies also specifically highlight the importance of *care* within the research relationship. Though I prefer to shy away from the "simplistic equation of women with care and nurturance" (Siegfried, 1996, as cited in Christians, 2003, p. 224), I do not want to discount the ethics of care associated with some feminist models of scholarship (e.g., Edwards & Mauthner, 2002; Hill Collins, 2000; Naples, 2003); similar concerns for fairness, empathy, and the conscious avoidance of risk are also evident in other critical and narrative models (e.g., Atkinson, 1998; Soobrayan, 2003). With regard to the current study, I approach this research endeavor ethically, because I approach it in a spirit of collaboration, care, fairness, and empathy.

Authenticity

Addressing ethical considerations that underlie this study serves the purpose of helping to establish that I, as the researcher, am trustworthy. Although it is not feasible to firmly delineate the researcher from the research, there are nevertheless other considerations to take into account when determining the trustworthiness of the research itself. In quantitative parlance, these considerations are known as *validity* and *reliability*, but these terms require some revision for work in the qualitative arena. Viable alternatives include *authenticity* and *authentic adequacy* (Lincoln, 1995), identifiable when research "displays the author's positionality… addresses the

community [where] the research was carried out… engages and gives voice to silenced or marginalized persons… explores the author's understandings before, during, and after the research experience… and… demonstrates openness between researchers and participants" (Denzin, 2003, p. 112). I insist that these goals are also important to the current study, and my research descriptions and analyses in subsequent chapters will attest to that.

Furthermore, assessing the trustworthiness of narrative research begins even before the data is written up and analyzed; the field notes, transcripts, and other field texts (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), must be trustworthy first. This means that these field texts should be comprehensible and thorough, annotated adequately so that the researcher can make sense of what these texts are, even after a period of separation from the data (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Likewise, "if the narrative researcher can demonstrate rigorous methods of reading and interpreting that would enable other researchers to track down his/her conclusions", then trustworthiness, via access and honesty, can be realized (Webster & Mertova, 2007, p. 92). Another term that is often used to describe trustworthy narrative research is *verisimilitude*: the results and analysis, "being well grounded and supportable… have the appearance of truth or reality" (Webster & Mertova, 2007, p. 10).

Now, the appearance of truth or reality — not truth or reality, but the *appearance* of it — is quite subjective; being honest and open about the researcher's subjective concerns is also a useful way of assessing the trustworthiness of this type of research. By introducing subjectivity into the analysis, I explain who I am, where I am, and how I fit into the research, since these *who*s and *where*s and *how*s play an integral and influential part in how the analysis is undertaken. Just as readers may draw their own conclusions about how these personal details affect the analysis of the research, it is also important for researchers themselves to identify how they

perceive their positioning to have affected their analyses. In so doing, we then work from the belief that "researchers need to understand themselves if they are to understand how they interpret narrators' stories… These researchers aim to undermine the myth of the invisible omniscient author" (Chase, 2005, p. 666). Throughout this study, then, I do not hide my presence as one of these visible, non-omniscient authors.

Finally, one of the most important methods for determining the trustworthiness of research is through member-checking. Especially when the research involves close relationships and the divulging of personal histories of participants, the corroboration of the participants is essential. In narrative work, this corroboration can take place on two levels, in the essence of the story that has been co-constructed from the data to produce the personal history, and in the accuracy of the analysis and interpretation undertaken by the researcher. With regard to the former, Atkinson (1998) has written that narrators have the last word, always, with how their stories take shape in writing. Clandinin & Connelly (2000) envisioned member-checking that goes beyond merely asking participants if we have correctly captured what they said or did; we also need to ask more identity-focused questions, such as "Is this you? Do you see yourself here?" in the narratives participants check (p. 148). But again, narrative analysis is more than simply reporting events on a timeline; it is making sense of these events and working to understand them within Clandinin and Connelly's three-dimensional, four-directional framework (2000). This means that the analysis of narratives must also be meaningful, accurate, and reasonable to the participants (LeCompte, 2000), and that incidents of confusion or disagreement be clearly addressed as well. In the end, with attention to these matters of ethics and authenticity, the research in this study can thus be deemed trustworthy.

Context of the Study: Where and Who

Though demographic statistics are constantly in flux, and though the relative size of the Armenian community in Los Angeles compared to the Armenian population worldwide varies depending on the sources consulted, one thing is certain: There are a lot of Armenian heritage immigrants in the San Fernando and San Gabriel Valley areas, where I work in two different community colleges, and the former area is how I would initially describe the location of my study. I first encountered all of this study's participants in the community college context as their English tutor or immediate job supervisor at Fernando College. I strongly considered including participants from Gabriel College for this study because at Gabriel College, where I am a part-time faculty member in the ESL department, approximately 95% of students enrolled in ESL classes are Armenian speakers of Armenian heritage[5]. The Gabriel population would certainly have added valuable and interesting voices to this study, since a majority of Gabriel's students are also part of the Armenian minority in the nation of Iran. However, all of my potential participants from Gabriel are students who could eventually or concurrently enroll in one (or another one) of my ESL classes during the course of this research. I believe that this could have presented an ethical dilemma with regard to assigning grades and developing close personal relationships that, while not insurmountable, was not an issue with my participants at Fernando.

Since I owe my relationships with the participants to the school where I first met them, some information about the school is in order. Fernando College is a two-year institution located in the San Fernando Valley area of California, and is part of a larger, nine-college district in Los Angeles. As of Fall 2010, the school enrolled approximately 19,000 part- and full-time students

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[5] This approximate and rather anecdotal percentage comes from brief surveys on my own students' first languages and prior academic experience, which I have distributed at the beginning of each semester since Spring, 2009. Neither the department nor the college systematically collects demographic information on students' first languages.

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each semester. Among these students, approximately 70% named English as their primary home language, 12% named Spanish, and 10% named Armenian (Fernando College Student Profile, Fall 2010). However, for a variety of reasons, my encounters with the Armenian population make up far more than 10% of my daily activity at Fernando, where I am employed as a full-time Instructional Assistant and part-time/substitute faculty member in the Learning Center. First, many of the students I tutor in the Learning Center are Armenian immigrants who speak Armenian at home; this is not surprising, since I primarily tutor ESL at this campus where Armenian speakers account for a large percentage of the students who do not name English as their primary language. Second, many of the student workers and tutors I come in contact with in the Learning Center are also Armenian immigrants whose home language is Armenian. The reasons behind this are a bit more complex. Several of our employees were first introduced to the Learning Center through the campus California Work Opportunities and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program, a state-funded welfare-to-work program that assists financially disadvantaged parents of dependent children. Over the last ten years, the Learning Center has employed approximately fifteen CalWorks recipients, and all but two of these employees have been Armenian immigrant women, and three of this study's four participants were introduced to me through this CalWorks program. More information about the four women is provided in the next section.

Participants

Having had contact for many years with immigrant women of Armenian heritage, across the spectrum of the diaspora, as a result of my learning support and instructional positions in two California community colleges with significant Armenian-born or Armenian-speaking enrollees, I have identified participants from among the population I currently know through a process of

purposive sampling. In other words, participants have been invited to join the research "not for their representativeness, but for their relevance to the research question" (Schwandt, 2007, p. 270). One critical issue in this type of sampling is the establishment of specific criteria that guide the identification of participants (Schwandt, 2007); in this case, the criteria are that potential participants be (1) multilingual, (2) multiliterate (3) women (4) of the Armenian diaspora. I am already familiar with many people who fit this profile, and a less ethical, more opportunistic researcher might simply choose to work with these participants because, quite simply, they are there, and they are accessible. As I hope is evident from reading about my ethical stance, I want to do what I can to quash this suspicion, openly declaring my commitment to answering important research questions; at the same time, I am certain that I would not have been aware of the rich issues at play among the community of multilingual, multiliterate Armenian women had I not, over the last several years, come to know my research subjects very well.

These "close relationships with participants [are] necessary work in narrative inquiry" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 82), and they align with qualitative approaches that recognize the many benefits that accrue when research participants are personally known to the researcher (Balan, 2005; Toma, 2000). These benefits include the existing trust and confidence between the researcher and the participants (Shi, 2003; Soobrayan, 2003), as well as "a sense of the context in which these narratives occur" (Toma, 2000, p. 179); these existing relationships add richness and depth to the research, along with "insights that would otherwise not be possible" (Craig & Huber, 2007, p. 255; cf. Atkinson, 1998).

With these considerations about personally-known research participants in mind, I made initial contact with five women, current and former community college students, who are multilingual, first generation immigrants of Armenian heritage. Prior to beginning the research, I

provided participants with the Informed Consent Form (see Appendix A) that was approved by IUP's IRB in April, 2011 (see Appendix D) and again in April, 2012 and 2013. In this initial meeting, I spent time with the participants to go over the details of this form. Prior to the beginning of data collection, one participant opted out of the study due to summer commitments to her son and her employer; however, since narrative studies often work with fewer participants than other qualitative methods (Chase, 2005; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), ending this endeavor with four rather than five participants ultimately allowed for more space and more detail for the four women whose stories are chronicled herein.

Throughout the background research and design phase of this study, despite having one participant opt out before the study actually began, I did not experience any shortfall of willing participants. In fact, I believe that it is because of my existing relationships with women in this community that I have been let into their lives; I will even go so far as to insist that as much as I am choosing them as research participants, they are coequal partners in this choosing, having already welcomed me into their lives in a way that fortuitously facilitated the research process for this study. I have in many cases met their children, grandchildren, and spouses, and they are similarly familiar with details of my personal life. Perhaps it is because of my own willingness to share my life with them that they have likewise opened up to me, and as Josselson (2007) wrote, "[s]elf-disclosure [by the researcher], as long as it does not embarrass the participant, may encourage a sense of collaboration and build rapport" (p. 547). Such collaboration and rapport clearly align with the principles espoused by feminist communitarian ethics, the framework which undergirds this study. An overview of some of each participant's characteristics appears below in Table 1.

Table 1

Research Participant Overview

Pseudonym	Birth Year	Birthplace	Languages	Year of U.S. Immigration
Lilit	1980	Yerevan, Armenia	Armenian Russian English *(Also studied French)*	1999
Mazar	1950	Yerevan, Armenia	Armenian Russian French English *(Is also studying Italian)*	2001
Root	1957	Yerevan, Armenia	Armenian Russian English *(Spoke Persian as a child, also studied Spanish)*	2003
Anna	1978	Artsvashen, Armenia	Armenian Russian English *(Also studied German)*	2007

Participant 1: Lilit. Lilit is in her thirties. She was born in Armenia in 1980 during the Soviet regime and grew up speaking Armenian and Russian, though Soviet rule ended when she was in her early teens. She immigrated to the United States in 1999 and gave birth to her children here in 2000 and 2001. I first met Lilit through Fernando College's CalWorks program, which is how she began working as an office assistant in the Fernando College Learning Center that I supervise. Over time, she assumed more responsibility in her job, eventually adding the role of multilingual tutor of Accounting and Child Development to her daily job duties. Though I am no longer her main supervisor, I served in that capacity for approximately three years. As of the time of this write-up, we still work together in the Learning Center, and I continue to serve as her general English tutor for her university coursework.

Participant 2: Mazar. Mazar was born in Armenia in 1950 during the Soviet regime and grew up speaking Armenian and Russian. Additionally, she began studying French in the first grade and received a Bachelor's degree in French from a major Armenian university. She is in her sixties and was a founder, teacher, and administrator of a French-language adult school in Armenia until 2001, when she immigrated to the United States. I was introduced to Mazar when she began working as a French tutor at Fernando College, where I supervised her work in my position with the Learning Center for approximately three years. She is no longer employed at Fernando, but she works on occasion as a teacher's assistant in a French-speaking *lycée* (high school) in Los Angeles. At the time of our interviews, she was also still enrolled at Fernando College, pursuing courses in swimming and Italian; therefore, although I occasionally help her with personal writing assignments, I am not her English tutor anymore.

Participant 3: Root. Root was born in 1957 in the republic of Armenia during the period of Soviet rule. As a result, she grew up speaking Armenian in her home and Russian in school and many other public settings. She is in her fifties and was a museum historian and archivist in Armenia until her immigration to the United States in 2003. I initially met Root, as I did Lilit, through Fernando College's CalWorks program. She worked for the Learning Center for approximately four years, and though she later returned to Fernando as a temporary full-time computer lab assistant, she is no longer employed or enrolled at Fernando. She works occasionally as a tutor for high school students who are new Armenian immigrants, and her regularly daily responsibilities also include serving in a caregiving role to her two grandchildren.

Participant 4: Anna. Anna, born in 1978, is in her thirties. Like the other participants, she was born in Armenia during the Soviet regime and grew up speaking Armenian and Russian. After graduating from high school, she moved with her parents and brother to Russia, where she

earned a six-year law degree prior to her immigration to the United States in 2007. I was introduced to Anna when she, also like the other participants, came to work at the Fernando College Learning Center. We have continued to work a few hours a week together, with her most recent work assignment providing her college credit for her major in Computer Applications and Office Technologies.

Data Collection Procedures

While it is important to recall the coequal status of participants in making methodological and other research-related decisions under a feminist communitarian ethical model, I have designed a study that incorporates multiple levels of participant choice, and I have indeed listened closely to my participants throughout the data collection and analysis phases of this project. After securing informed consent from each participant[6], I collected the following sources of data: (1) semi-structured individual interviews of approximately ten hours with each participant, for a total of over forty hours of interviews; (2) written language and literacy logs from the participants, collected at various times throughout the data collection process; and (3) a researcher journal, used to help track my own perceptions and emerging ideas throughout the research process.

The original design of the study also included the participants' writing brief language and literacy histories prior to the beginning of our interviews, but only one participant seemed to view this writing activity as something other than work, so not wanting to impose, I did not push the other participants to share their stories in this medium. Due in part to the fact that the four participants know each other and might therefore have enjoyed sharing their experiences as part of this research, I also originally planned to convene focus groups during the summer of 2012.

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[6] My study was granted IRB approval in April 2011, with continuances granted in April 2012 and April 2013, and with approval lasting through April 2014.

However, as the interviews progressed, I felt that asking for even more time from the participants would be yet another imposition on their already hectic summer schedules, so I chose not to pursue the focus groups, relying primarily on the extensive individual interviews to construct the participants' narratives and my initial analyses.

Data Source 1: Individual Interviews

As indicated above, I originally planned to have participants compose a written account of their language and literacy history prior to our first individual interview. Toward that end, after securing informed consent, I provided the participants with a prompt to help get them started on such a history (see Appendix B). Though only one participant, Anna, composed this written history, the writing prompt nevertheless served for all of the participants as an overview of some of the topics that could be discussed in the interviews. As a result, participants came to the first interview meeting with some ideas about what they wanted to highlight in their interviews, though only Anna physically wrote those ideas on paper.

I began the interviews by asking the participants to respond orally to the general questions on the writing prompt. Using those responses as an authentic jumping-off point, I then moved into extensive interviews that first addressed issues that arose from what they had mentioned in their oral responses to the writing prompt. Starting with the topics identified as important by the participants was especially vital to interviews conducted within a feminist framework; only after giving the participants the time and space to organically direct their narrative trajectories did I begin to ask questions that I had compiled from other studies based on language and literacy histories (Appendix C).

As a narrative researcher, I was responsible for creating an atmosphere that encouraged stories, rather than mere reports of events (Chase, 1995), as well as for "generat[ing] data with

people rather than record[ing] information about them" (Carspecken, 1996, p. 42). One goal of this phase of the research was to understand the interviewee as a narrator, which meant "mak[ing] a conceptual shift away from the idea that interviewees have answers to researchers' questions and toward the idea that interviewees are narrators with stories to tell and voices of their own" (Chase, 2005, p. 660). My intent to create an atmosphere that encouraged stories over reports was strengthened by the fact that my participants were personally known to me, and that prior to this research undertaking, we had already established a relationship of trust, without which this study could not have been designed or carried out in its present form. Furthermore, the fact that the participants preferred to discuss their histories orally rather than in writing lent even more of the air of "interview as conversation" to this phase of data collection (Kvale, 1996, p. 19).

Understanding that I went into interviews intending to have the participants' stories determine the direction of the interviews, I nevertheless was prepared with additional questions that helped delve further into the experiences and stories that the participants related. I relied on my own ability to spontaneously ask good follow-up questions, an ability largely enabled as a result of my existing friendly relationships with the participants; nevertheless, before this dissertation process, I could not realistically call myself a seasoned interviewer, so during the first and subsequent interviews, I was prepared with follow-up questions that had been employed in the sizable number of sources I consulted for my literature review, including sources on the life history interview (e.g., Atkinson, 1998) and multilingual literacy narratives (e.g., Belcher & Connor, 2001). As mentioned above, a substantive list of questions from interview protocols in past studies appears in Appendix C.

Over the course of six to seven individual meetings with each participant, I conducted approximately ten hours of individual interviews each, for a total of more than forty hours of interview data. Participants selected the location for the interviews, and I was open to working with them anywhere they chose, including in their homes, in my home, at our shared school setting, or in a community setting. Pavlenko (2008b) has written that sensitivity to this and other logistics pertaining to individual interviews is particularly important when working with bi- and multilingual speakers who already hold dominated positions as a result of their English proficiency, and of course sensitivity to these issues also goes hand-in-hand with the ethics of critical and feminist interviewing. In the end, two participants preferred meeting in their homes, and two preferred meeting in a community space, so I was able to assuage all of their preferences in arranging interview locations.

Interviews were digitally audio-recorded and immediately transcribed using *ExpressScribe* software installed on my laptop computer. The program allowed for very easy transfer of files from the digital recorder to the computer, and the audio files were then stored during and after their transcription into a word processing file. Participants were allowed access to the digital audio copies as well as the transcripts during all phases of the research. Though I had access to video recording technology, I anticipated that its presence would be awkward, and that the benefits associated with video technology would be less than the strain it may have put on the interviewing process. In order to avoid losing any details from the interviews, I took hand-written notes as necessary. Transcribing interviews immediately after they took place also helped keep the content of the conversation fresh in my mind when it came time to transform the audio files into written documents. More importantly, though I used the questions in Appendix C over the course of the interview period, transcribing each interview prior to conducting the next one

ensured that the subsequent interview protocols originated more from the participants'

suggestions than from any pre-determined source, a crucial consideration when designing

participant-driven research.

Data Source 2: Language and Literacy Logs

Starting from the first interview and continuing for a period of eight weeks, I asked

participants to compose weekly language and literacy logs, with the option of completing them

more frequently, such as daily, if desired. These logs were designed to record what the

participants did with their different languages in their daily lives, as well as to encourage

reflection on those actions; a focus on what people do with language and literacy corresponds

closely to one conceptualization of a language or literacy *practice* (Ivanic, 2009). Since the

notion of a language and literacy *history* conjures images of the past, these logs were designed to

provide an eye into the participants' *present* language and literacy practices to add richness to the

data that told the women's stories as they were in progress.

In keeping with feminist principles of collaboration and shared decision-making in the

research act, participants who chose to document their activities were able to keep this record in

the medium of their choice. Since this activity was somewhat foreign to them, as it would be to

most anyone not regularly accustomed to participating in reflective research, I offered a template

for them to use for recording their language and literacy logs (see Appendices E and F). I

developed this template based on Jones, Martin-Jones, and Bhatt's (2000) work with participant

diaries. The primary purpose of this template was to provide participants with a simple format to

use when recording their daily or weekly language and literacy activity; however, Jones, Martin-

Jones, and Bhatt (2000) warned about how "our agendas, as researchers, and our categories [are]

built into the participants' diaries" through the layout of the template (p. 346). With this in mind,

I consciously aimed to design the template so that it was "sufficiently open to allow the participants to provide their own accounts" (Jones, Martin-Jones, & Bhatt, p. 346). The format for this template was therefore dynamic and open to alterations as suggested by the participants.

In addition to providing an eye on the present language and literacy practices of the participants, the language and literacy logs were further designed to help keep the participants in control of the direction of the interviews. With all of this careful design and rationale in mind, though, the logs, like the initial language and literacy prompt, were not that appealing to the participants, who preferred the more personal, face-to-face nature of our interviews to document their experiences. Mazar completed the first week of logs in detail, with a few pages of additional handwritten notes to capture her reflections in progress; however, after the first week, she realized that her days and weeks did not vary much from that first week's record, so she stopped recording in writing what she thought was *monotone* (French, *routine* or *monotonous*). For a few weeks, Lilit and Root both checked off some boxes perfunctorily with a few additional words of description, but the exercise itself seemed like a formality and quite a bit like a repetitive homework assignment. Anna, the one participant who brought to her first interview a written response to the initial language and literacy history prompt, chose not to use the daily/weekly logs at all. All in all, then, while the logs added detail to Mazar's past history and some brief insights into Root's and Lilit's present experiences with languages and literacies, the narratives that appear in Chapters Four through Seven are drawn very heavily from the oral interview data.

Data Source 3: Researcher Journal

Finally, throughout the period of data collection and analysis, I kept a researcher journal with the intention of documenting my own experiences, difficulties, insights, epiphanies, and

trajectories as I conducted the research for this study. Borg (2001) identified some of the benefits of the researcher journal as: resolving fieldwork anxiety; dealing with negative feedback; "articulating and rationalizing concerns and exploring solutions; acknowledging, expressing, and examining feelings… describing and evaluating progress (or lack of it); [and] clarifying concepts and their implications for the research" (pp. 169-170). With this in mind, I used the journal not just as a mechanism for recording events and thoughts, but also as "a forum for reflection where ideas [could be] generated and explored and discoveries made in and through writing" (Borg, 2001, p. 160). While I did not want this data source to take precedence over the stories my participants related, keeping the research journal helped me to track my shifting positioning as the research progressed, positioning which played a key role in the interpretive phases of qualitative research.

Within narrative research, this research journal also fulfilled the function whereby I was myself participating in some of the work that I was asking my participants to do: I asked that they write about themselves before the first interview, and I did the same. I asked that they compose weekly reflections on the activities that were the focus of this study, and, as it happened, I ended up writing far more in my journal than they did in theirs. Though I did not print my entries for them to read and reflect upon in subsequent interviews — I didn't want to add even more homework to their to-do lists — the reflections and analytical memos documented via this journaling activity helped move subsequent interviews forward with questions about emerging themes that I perceived in the individuals' trajectories as well as in the women's collective experiences.

Research Timeline

Since this study was not set in a classroom, it was not necessary to schedule the research tasks around particular times of the academic semester. While the original plan was to collect all study data over eight consecutive weekly meetings with the participants, I adjusted that plan slightly as we progressed through the summer. For three of the participants, the seventh interview was the natural stopping point, since at that time we had met for over ten hours each and we simply felt finished; and one participant, Root, had to attend to some family matters during July and August, so we resumed our meetings in October and November, meeting for just over ten hours in the course of six meetings. The data collection schedule as it ultimately occurred appears below in Table 2.

Analytical Procedures

As is to be expected in this qualitative work, data analysis was an iterative process that took place concurrently with as well as after data collection. Interviews and logs were immediately transcribed and became material that influenced subsequent meetings with participants, and analysis of this material thus began with those first transcriptions. What this analysis entailed is sketched out in the remainder of this chapter.

First, I went through a number of steps with my data before I actually sat down to construct and compose the narrative chapters.

1. The first interview with each participant began with us discussing the questions from the Initial Writing Prompt for Participant's Language and Literacy History, located in Appendix B. Participants were reminded that the focus of the interviews would be up to them, so different participants spent different amounts of time on the individual questions and their natural trajectories.

Table 2

Data Collection Schedule

Week	Data Collection Tasks
Pre-week 1: One to two weeks before the first interviews were scheduled	▪ Obtained Informed Consent. ▪ Distributed prompts for initial language and literacy histories.
Week 1 (July 2012)	▪ Conducted the first individual interview with each participant. ▪ Distributed and explained language and literacy logs. ▪ Kept researcher journal and conducted preliminary analysis.
Weeks 2-7 (July and August 2012)	▪ Conducted six additional individual interviews with Lilit, Anna, and Mazar, Conducted three additional individual interviews with Root. ▪ Retrieved and discussed language and literacy logs during some of the individual interviews. ▪ Kept researcher journal and continued preliminary analysis.
October and November 2012	▪ Conducted two additional individual interviews with Root, whose schedule did not allow data collection during the late summer. ▪ Kept researcher journal and continued preliminary analysis.

2. Prior to the second meeting, I transcribed the first interview and composed a lengthy

analytical memo that listed past, present, and future time references; emerging themes

that I saw in the data; a list of follow-up questions to address in the next interview; and a section for other notes. A sample analytical memo appears in Appendix G.

3. I arrived at the next interview meeting with a new set of questions based on the prior interview. Each subsequent interview began with time for participants to reflect on their previous week. We followed this by going through the new week's interview protocol, and, if there was time — interviews were about one to one and a half hours each — we moved into the questions that appear in Appendix C.

4. Subsequent interviews repeated the transcription and memoing processes in (2) and (3) above.

5. After all of the interviews were conducted, I loaded all of the transcripts and analytical memos into a computer program called Dedoose, which is a secure, cloud-based system for storing and coding social science research data. Although I spent a considerable amount of time on coding all transcripts and memos for qualitative themes, at the end of this process, I was left with a lengthy and quite unmanageable list of codes and themes, many of which were only peripherally related to the big-picture goal of looking at the women's languages and literacies. That this list and all of the associated data were navigable only on a computer screen and not in paper hard copies also proved difficult for me; I did not realize until that time that my affinity for physical cutting and organizing, part of my tactile relationship with paper, was an integral part of my analytical process. My list of codes and the Dedoose system in general may prove helpful for smaller research endeavors at a later date; however, when it was time to sit down and write the first narrative chapter, I scrapped the plan to use Dedoose and switched to a more tactile process with the hard copy transcripts.

6. At this point, my data essentially included my printed transcripts, analytical memos, and the other written artifacts from the participants. I then reviewed all of the transcripts and coded them simply *Past, Present,* and *Future*, with a few areas coded with very basic tags like *Good Quotes* or *Future Research Ideas*. I then cut the transcripts and sorted the pieces into *Past, Present, Future, Quotes*, and *Other*. Only after undertaking these steps could the process of narrative re-storying and thematic analysis begin.

Narrative Analysis: Answering the First Research Question

The first research question that this study aimed to answer was: *What are the participants' past and present experiences with living in multiple languages and literacies? In other words, what language and literacy history emerges from each participant's narratives?* To answer this question, I used the transcripts, other written artifacts from the participants, and my researcher journal/analytical memos to construct each woman's language and literacy history. Though some interviewing approaches address life history issues chronologically (e.g., Atkinson, 1998; 2007), such a structure was not imposed *a priori* in the data collection phase, but was applied as the data sources came together to present a picture of each participant's language and literacy history. Narrative inquirers know this as *restorying*, or organizing the data with an essential emphasis on the temporal dimension of past, present, and future, an emphasis which sets narrative apart from other qualitative genres (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Creswell, 2007).

In presenting the prose of the participants' stories in the following chapters, I have strived to retain the voice of each participant, though I acknowledge that imposing this three-dimensional structure does indeed place me within the narrative; it is for this reason, at

minimum, that the participant narratives are most accurately described as co-constructions. As Tierney (2000) explained:

> If we are to believe the vast majority of [participant narratives] that exist, those individuals whose lives have been reported are among the most grammatically correct and logical speakers we know; they speak in complete sentences and they develop ideas in chronological sequence. Academic rules help to shape life stories to such an extent that narrative texts cannot be seen as other than cocreated. (p. 544)

Though the stories were co-constructed, the participants always had the last word, as indeed they should (Atkinson, 2007). Toward this end, I gave each participant a copy of her completed narrative chapter, to which each woman responded with a few clarifying dates and details; no major changes to the storylines were requested or required.

As the three-dimensional story developed, I sought to understand how the participants constructed meaning out of their experiences, and how sense was made in the act of narration. While narrative research in general, and critical and feminist narrative research in particular, prioritizes the meanings that the participants place on their experiences, my task as a critical, feminist, narrative researcher was also to explain the sense that I made of the narratives by connecting the participants' stories "back to the set of historic, structural, and economic relations in which they are situated" (Fine, Weis, Weseen, & Wong, 2000, p. 126). To accomplish this, I used a process of thematic analysis, guided initially by Gee's (2008) *situated meanings* tool of critical discourse analysis.

Situated Meanings and Thematic Analysis: Answering the Second Research Question

The narratives that were constructed from the data painted portraits of the participants' language and literacy histories, investigated novel and shared practices, and addressed the

meanings that the participants ascribed to those histories and practices. However, the analysis, true to work situated in critical perspectives, did not end there. As a reminder, the second research question this study aimed to answer was: *What additional insights about the intersections of language, culture, and gender emerge from the narratives?* While narrative analysis undertaken through a critical, feminist lens indeed played a crucial role in answering this multi-faceted question, the research effort was deepened and enriched by combining narrative inquiry with the *situated meanings* tool of critical discourse analysis (Gee, 2008), along with general principles of thematic analysis.

Since Fairclough's (1989, first edition of Fairclough, 2001; 1995) inception of the term *Critical Discourse Analysis* (CDA)[7], several additional models have been proposed (e.g., Gee, 1999; van Dijk, 1993). As Rogers (2004) summarized, models of CDA are "concerned with a critical theory of the social world, the relationship of language and discourse in the construction and representation of this social world, and a methodology that allows [researchers] to describe, interpret, and explain such relationships" (p. 3). From this summary, some defining characteristics of CDA emerge.

First, being "concerned with a critical theory of the social world" means that CDA aims to elucidate "naturalized discourse conventions [which] are a most effective mechanism for sustaining and reproducing cultural and ideological dimensions of hegemony" (Fairclough, 1995, p. 94). In elucidating "naturalized discourse conventions," researchers investigate "social

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[7] In the discussion that follows, I adopt the acronym CDA to refer to the collection of approaches that have been discussed since Fairclough's original (1989, first edition of Fairclough, 2001) model of Critical Discourse Analysis. Gee (1999) explicitly differentiates Fairclough's model from subsequent ones, referring only to the former with the acronym *CDA* and the latter as models of *critical discourse analysis*, spelled out and not used as an acronym. Though this distinction is helpful in Gee's work, it does not serve mine well. Thus, in contrast to Gee (1999), I use *CDA* to refer not to Fairclough's model, but to the "wider array of approaches" that have been described since Fairclough's original work.

inequality as it is expressed, constituted, [and] legitimized… by language use" (Wodak & Meyer, 2009, p. 10) while attempting, as in narrative research, to "figure out the taken-for-grantedness" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 78) that people express through language use. A second point that arises from Rogers's (2004) discussion of how CDA conceptualizes the relationship between "language and discourse" on one hand and the "social world" on the other is that this relationship is understood to be mutually constitutive. As such, "we fit our language to a situation or context that our language, in turn, helped to create in the first place" (Gee, 1999, p. 11); in other words, as people engage in discourse to express what they conceive of as reality, they are, through that discourse, effectively creating that reality. Finally, in Rogers's (2004) description of CDA as "a methodology that allows [researchers] to describe, interpret, and explain" the mutually constitutive relationship between discourse and the social world, she is drawing attention to the fact that beyond the standard qualitative tasks of description and interpretation, researchers working with CDA take on the additional task of explanation and critique of why and how discourses work (Rogers, 2004; van Dijk, 1993).

Though I originally intended to do a more complex Gee-ian critical discourse analysis of my data, I realized as I compiled the participants' language literacy histories that what was most salient in the data were some *situated meanings* of particular terms that appeared in all of the women's interviews. By *situated meanings*, I am referring to the meanings that the participants ascribe to particular words and phrases, flexible and subject to change depending on the context in which they are used (Gee, 2008); as addressed in Chapter Eight, these terms were *woman, literacy, language knowledge,* and *English.* Upon identifying the situated meanings of these key terms, I used them as a springboard off of which to delve more deeply into some of the central

themes that emerged organically from the data. These situated meanings and interpretive themes appear in Chapter Eight.

Methodological Disruptions

Throughout the above description of the methodology employed in this study, I have at times referred to a few plans laid out in my original study design that, for one reason or another, had to change. This section provides a brief summary of those changes, methodological disruptions that, while not overwhelming, nevertheless changed the outline and outcomes of the study.

The first changes in my original study design occurred when I realized that while all four women were happy to share their time and their lives with me, the writing tasks I envisioned for the study seemed more like work than like a leisurely morning or afternoon spent in conversation between friends. When only one of the participants responded in writing to the Initial Writing Prompt for Participant's Language and Literacy History (Appendix B), I made sure to address the questions in that prompt in the first interview. Likewise, when I saw that the participants were not very interested in keeping weekly written logs of their activities with languages and literacies, I made sure to begin interviews with reference to those activities so that the women had a chance to include the kinds of details that would have otherwise come from completing the written logs.

The second set of changes to the study design had to do with scheduling issues during the summer of data collection. Again, although the women seemed genuinely pleased to spend their time with me recounting their memories and aspirations, they all also had busy and vibrant family lives, on which I aimed *not* to impose. As a result, I sensed that convening focus groups in addition to the individual interviews would be too burdensome with regard to the time I had to

take from them. Since I intended to address emerging shared themes in the focus groups, I made

sure to incorporate questions about those shared themes in the individual interviews;

furthermore, I met with participants for a final individual interview in January, 2013, during

which I continued discussing the findings and themes that I had pulled together since the

summer. Additionally, on the topic of scheduling interviews around the women's hectic lives,

Root's scheduling obligations during the summer of 2012 changed after our fourth interview

meeting, so we ended up having two additional interviews in October and November, 2012, to

make up for the time that we missed in July and August.

The last change to the study design involved the tools I used to thematize and analyze my

data. I originally intended to undertake a specifically discourse-focused analysis of the data using

a range of tools from Critical Discourse Analysis, with an emphasis on Gee's (2008) *situated*

meanings and *cultural models/figured worlds* tools. While I did indeed use the women's

narratives to arrive at some of their shared *situated meanings*, I realized as I was writing the next

five chapters that I was not, in fact, doing a full-on critical discourse analysis; my analysis

focused instead on addressing interpretive themes that organically arose from the data and

corresponded to some existing theoretical constructs in TESOL and applied linguistics. As

expected, these situated meanings and interpretive themes appear in the final chapter.

Chapter Summary

This chapter began with an overview of critical, feminist qualitative research, followed

by a discussion of narrative inquiry, a methodology that works particularly well with critical,

feminist frameworks. I then addressed some of the ethical concerns that can arise in this type of

qualitative research, along with how this study's research design attended to those concerns. I

presented suggestions for criteria with which to evaluate this type of research, criteria which add

further weight to the importance of ethics and care in research, and criteria which were foremost in my mind as I designed and implemented this study. I followed this with a description of the context for the current study, and then spelled out explicit measures I took in the collection and analysis of the data I used to answer my research questions. I then described a combination of theoretical constructs and interpretive techniques from both narrative inquiry and critical discourse analysis that I incorporated as I answered this study's two research questions, and I followed this up with a summary of the changes I made to the study design throughout the process of data collection and analysis.

Prelude to the Narrative Chapters: Introducing the Participants' Journeys

Chapters 4 through 7 document the co-constructed narrative journeys of the four participants, with more theoretically-focused discussion and analysis presented in chapter 8. This organization varies somewhat from the more standard format of a fourth chapter of data and fifth chapter of analysis and conclusions; however, the format in place here, which gives each participant a her own chapter, is more useful for ensuring that each woman has her voice heard, a factor of crucial importance to any work that labels itself critical and feminist. Casanave (2010) asserted that

> [A]s the approaches and epistemologies of qualitative inquiry expand, the styles and forms with which we represent our work need to expand as well, and to form a coherent match with our approaches and assumptions about knowledge and reality. Conventions of discourse, after all, are social constructions that are not static; they change with time, context, and circumstance. It does not make sense for potentially innovative and creative novice scholars to cling to formulaic traditions as though these traditions were engraved in stone. (p. 12)

With this conscious choice of representation in mind, the individual narrative chapters are organized with attention to Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) past-present-future model; in particular, each chapter first presents details of past experiences prior to immigration to the United States; then a chronicle of each woman's life from immigration to the time of this study; followed by each participant's future aspirations; and ending with initial interpretations of each individual narrative, to be revisited more cohesively in chapter 8. The narratives themselves could have been presented in any number of orders — based on the age of the participants, the years of formal schooling, the number of daily languages in everyday use, among others. However, with the emphasis on time progression that takes precedence in narrative work, the narrative chapters here are presented in the order of the participants' immigration to the United States. Hence Lilit, who came in 1999, arrived first, and so her story appears first; then we meet Mazar and Root, who arrived in 2001 and 2003, respectively; and finally Anna, who came in 2007, was the fourth to arrive, so her narrative appears fourth.

In preparing each narrative for the reading audience, I was careful to foreground the voice of each woman in the majority of each chapter, with my own interpretive voice more dominant in the last section. Still, the task of transforming 125-150+ single-spaced pages of interview transcripts per person into a 20-25 double-spaced-page personal history was my job, not the women's, so even the sections that highlight their voices are filtered through how I perceived those voices. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, but worth repeating here, each participant was given time to carefully review her story and add or delete details as she saw fit, as well as to comment on my interpretations of her journey. It is only with this collaboration that this work can be considered trustworthy and ethical.

And now the journeys begin.

CHAPTER FOUR

LILIT

I am not a quiet Armenian woman.

Lilit, aged 32-33 during this study, was born in Yerevan, Armenia when Armenia was a republic of the USSR (see Figure 4). Until her immigration to the United States in 1999, she lived in Armenia, where she finished high school and then began but did not complete her undergraduate education. She speaks Armenian[8], Russian, and English; she is married with two children; and she is currently pursuing her Bachelor's degree in Armenian Studies from a university in Southern California. Among the participants, she was the first to immigrate to America, so her narrative appears here first; of all of the participants' narratives, hers is the one which most directly highlights how, as the youngest of the participants, she has been able to defy some of the cultural expectations placed on her because of her gender, in part because of her decision, at age 32, to pursue a university degree in English.

Traveling Through the Past: *Other*ed Bilingualism, Independence, and Karabagh

Lilit's Bilingualism

From her earliest experiences with formal schooling, Lilit began to equate knowledge of a language with knowledge of writing in that language, and that knowledge of writing was first expressed in and evaluated on clear, standard penmanship. Even in first grade Armenian class,

> You had to know the letters, but you have to write cursive. That's important. We had the
>
> small lines, so we had to practice in the lines, and if you're not good you have to practice
>
> a lot. They pay attention to that to grade your writing. You also have to write with your

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[8] Here and throughout the remainder of this dissertation, unless otherwise noted, *Armenian* as a language refers to Eastern Armenian, the variant spoken in the nation of Armenia.

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Figure 4. Partial detail map of Armenia. Shown here is the capital Yerevan, where the participants Lilit, Mazar, and Root were born. This map also shows the border with Turkey to the west. Going counterclockwise, just under the city of Ararat, the next bordering country is Iran; and Azerbaijan is to the south and east. Not shown: the northern border with Georgia. Image Credit: Google Maps, retrieved July 27, 2013.

right hand. You can play with your left hand, but they have some rules, and you cannot

write with your left hand. (Interview 1, July 3, 2012).

This emphasis on accuracy and attention to a standard form continued into the second grade,

when, as mandated in the Soviet system, Lilit's bilingual education in Russian commenced. This

early age was also Lilit's first brush with *other*ness in a second language, when a Russian

language teacher shamed her for her accent, leaving a lasting impression that a foreign accent is

something to be eradicated:

When I learned Russian, I spoke very… I had accent. When I spoke, my teacher told me, "I'm sorry, Lilit. Do you have some grandpa from Georgia?" I said, "NO!" and I stopped speaking. She told me, "Speak!" I said no. She said, "You have to speak so then your accent will leave." (Interview 1, July 3, 2012)

During the Soviet period, studying Russian involved more than just the language; studying anything essentially meant learning "just the Russian way" (Interview 7, August 15, 2012), from exploration of only Russian points of view in subject-specific courses like child development, to suppression of the Armenian language and a general taboo against discussing the Armenian genocide in school. Following the Soviet period, Lilit's relationship with Russian continued into her formal education in Armenia, which ended in early 1999 after two and a half years at the university. Though used less than Armenian, Russian was spoken regularly in her childhood home, and she still interacts with Russian on a daily basis today through occasional conversations and regular viewing of Russian television programming. The same cannot be said for French, which Lilit studied as a foreign language from fourth through tenth grade[9], but did not maintain outside of the school setting: "When I graduated, I never used the French language so I forgot it" (Interview 1, July 3, 2012). Therefore, although she studied in three alphabets throughout her youth, she considered herself bilingual until she began studying and living in English.

Lilit and Armenia: Exercising Independence

After the fall of the Soviet Union, Armenia declared independence in 1991. Lilit was in the sixth grade then, and at age 12, she had already begun exhibiting signs of independence herself. Unlike other girls in her family, who had to be accompanied by the entire family when

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[9] Under the Soviet system, high school ended after ten years, not twelve, as in the American system.

shopping to ensure that the girls bought appropriately modest clothes, Lilit was granted at least a small amount of freedom in that regard:

> For the shopping, they have to go whole family together. If they purchase some dress for the girl, dad is supposed to look at it, to say is it good or not, too short or long enough. Oh my god, my dad never did that! My uncles and my family discussed about what I was supposed to wear, but my parents trusted me a lot to decide. (Interview 5, August 1, 2012)

Later, at 14, Lilit was starting to sense some of the tension arising from situations where women held little or no power, and in one exchange with a 16-year-old cousin, she voiced her opposition to the status quo. This was one of Lilit's earliest memories of not being a "quiet Armenian woman" (Interview 1, July 3, 2012). While in Armenia, Lilit lived in Yerevan, the center of city life in Armenia. Her cousin lived in a small village, and when Lilit asked the cousin to visit her in Yerevan, the cousin's boyfriend forbade it. She recalls:

> Her boyfriend didn't want her to go. I said to him, "Who are you? She has a parent to tell her what to do!" So I started arguing with him. You have to show you have your opinion. I told him, if you don't believe her when she goes to my home, what will it be like when you married? I told my cousin, "He is always going to argue with you. Show your character! Show what you are, who you are." (Interview 3, July 19, 2012)

Her adolescence was not, however, without examples of adults who supported and, in some cases, even encouraged her independent streak. Most importantly, her parents were receptive to the independent woman she was becoming. Just as they had allowed her to exercise some freedom with regard to her choice of clothes when she was younger, they granted her some leeway with curfew when going out to parties or social outings while she was in high school and

beginning her university work under their roof. Additionally, in her final year of high school, she served as a *de facto* assistant to her male math teacher, who was also the school principal. Although report cards from her other teachers often admonished her for "always arguing," having "a lot of energy," and "talking too much," (Interview 2, July 11, 2012), those same qualities were the ones that the math teacher/principal appreciated in Lilit. She recounts how this relationship developed after the principal's secretary was consistently absent, and Lilit stepped in. "I helped him. I talked to him. I was always arguing with him, saying, 'Let's try to do this, let's try, we can change this' [*laughter*]" (Interview 2, July 11, 2012). She elaborated:

> I made suggestions about what we can do for tenth graders, and he liked that. He was a very free man, but my other teacher, she doesn't like it. I wasn't shy. Usually the principal is the very strong man so nobody can talk with him, but I liked to talk to him. He appreciated it. Yes! (Interview 3, July 19, 2012)

The End of Childhood: From Karabagh to the University

During Lilit's childhood and adolescent years, Armenia as a nation experienced some significant instances of collective suffering, first via a devastating earthquake that ravaged the cities of Spitak and Gyumri in 1988, and then via the territorial conflict between Armenia and neighboring Azerbaijan over what is now the republic of Nagorno-Karabagh, which began shortly before the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Though the two countries have reached official settlements on their disputes since then, Karabagh, as Lilit refers to the area, continues to be a source of regional violence. Lilit does not have familial relations in Karabagh; nevertheless, it played a part in her life history because on the day she graduated from high school in 1995, one of numerous ongoing battles in the area claimed the lives of some of her neighbors, marking

her turning point into adulthood, a period when she would begin studying at the university level, immigrate to America, and get married.

After high school graduation, Lilit began the testing process to advance to postsecondary studies. The entrance exams at that time were administered after high school graduation and were geared toward specific areas of study, and Lilit chose Library Science and Bibliography as her major, with an emphasis on the study of Armenian language and literature. She successfully passed the exam and entered a major Armenian university, where she studied *grapar* (classical Armenian) and the eastern variant of *ashkharabar* (modern Armenian), in addition to library science, Armenian history and selections from the Armenian literature canon. While her coursework focused on her major, in her free time she also enjoyed reading various other translated works of literature by English and French authors, among others. She stayed at the university for two and a half years until she decided to immigrate to the United States, a decision that was predicated on her engagement to an Armenian man, now her husband, who was living in America.

Lilit's Engagement: Re-Interpreting Traditions

Lilit's independent streak from childhood and adolescence continued to motivate her in her early adulthood when she became engaged and decided to immigrate to the United States. While the traditional path for her would have been to graduate, settle down with a husband, and start a family close to home, she set off on her own trajectory which, though still leading to the conventional ends of marriage and children, nonetheless differed from what was expected in Armenian society. While in her teens, she had a conversation with her grandmother about plans for her future:

For girls, you have to get married when you are 20 or 21. After 24 is too late. Everybody said, "She's already a big girl, why she doesn't have anybody? You are so old! You have to get married, think about it!" I said, "Give me time. I'm just going to the university. When I finish, maybe—" My grandma said, "You know what? When you finish your university, you will already be like your auntie [who was 30 and unmarried]. So don't think about that." (Interview 5, August 1, 2012)

Under pressure to prioritize marriage, she was set up with a few suitors by her uncles and other family members; unbeknownst to them, she had already begun a relationship two years before that with her husband-to-be, someone she had met at a party through a university classmate. He was already living in America and invited her there, but she had not yet decided to settle down with him. "I thought he would go and find some American. I thought, 'Who's going to come back for an Armenian girl?'" (Interview 5, August 1, 2012). When she finally broke the news that her boyfriend was living in Los Angeles, she remembers her family's response. "They got like a heart attack! Oh my god! And my mom said, 'Don't worry! He's coming back here!'" (Interview 5, August 1, 2012). Her family expected that he would tire of the United States, come back to Armenia, and marry Lilit. He did indeed come back, in the year 2000, but by that time, he and Lilit were already married, and the trip was merely a visit.

Before the wedding, as is common in Armenian culture, they went through some formality to become engaged, and this process to Lilit was "like a movie" (Interview 5, August 1, 2012). As Lilit narrated the events that led up to her engagement, she also explained some details about Armenian engagement traditions, in part to describe how her own case differed from them. What generally happens, she explained, is that the couple gathers together with their extended families, usually at the woman's house, and the families discuss the merits of the

match. If the man's family agrees to the marriage, a ring is formally offered to the woman in front of the family during a second gathering. In Lilit's case, since her boyfriend was out of the country, the negotiations came primarily via her brother-in-law. At the time of the first get-together, no one in Lilit's family expected that the proposal would be followed by her moving to America, so what ensued was a bit of a surprise. During that first meeting, her brother-in-law came to her parents' house before the other in-laws arrived:

> My husband's parents were very old, so he said they wanted to meet me. My mom and dad said, okay, it's not traditional [without the other half of the couple present], but okay. My mom asked my brother-in-law, "Los Angeles, when will he come back?" And my brother-in-law said, "Oh! He got the green card!" When I came back in the room, I smell something — we have the — something for a heart attack, some kind of drop. My dad, he's sitting very sadly, and my mom said, "You said he was going to come back!" Then my husband's side, everybody came. They started to fight. (Interview 5, August 1, 2012)

Lilit explained that although the proposal and acceptance are often offered when the families meet for a second time in the woman's home, there was no agreement to this pairing until "they came five times. Every time when they came, it was like 911 came" (Interview 5, August 1, 2012). Finally, in the fifth gathering, a ring was offered and they became engaged.

About five months passed between the proposal and Lilit's initial trip to America; during that time, family members and neighbors voiced many objections. "Why can't he come back here? If he's a good man, then he can come and work here," her father said. Throughout the five months,

all the neighbors, everybody, whenever anybody saw me, they said, "Bad girl. Poor man [referring to her father]. He raised her, he gave her an education, he spent so much money, and now she's going to go and forget about them. (Interview 5, August 1, 2012)

There was even a brief moment when Lilit considered giving in to these pressures and calling it off, but in the end, her parents gave her the same type of trust they had given her in the past when choosing clothes and setting curfews, even though usually

at that time, nobody would leave the daughter alone to choose. My mom said, "You know what, you have to decide it. That's your life. If something happens, all the time you will say that was our fault, so go ahead. It's your choice." (Interview 5, August 1, 2012)

Lilit says that the neighbors "held their breath for me to come back because I never cooked or did woman stuff in my home" (Interview 5, August 1, 2012). They must have stopped holding it at some point, because she has lived in America ever since.

Traveling to the Present: Becoming Lilit

Lilit immigrated to America in 1999 at the age of 18. Since then, she has taken on new roles as a multilingual Armenian woman — a wife and mother, as is expected in her culture — but as she did in the past, she has assumed these roles in ways that she positively identifies as being somewhat nontraditional. In addition to being a wife and mother, Lilit has taken on another set of duties that has come to help her understand and redefine herself and her goals: being an American college student. First as a student of Fernando College, she began working in the Learning Center in 2007, where she ultimately assumed a trilingual position of authority as a tutor in one of her fields of expertise, accounting; and in Fall 2012, after the data collection period for this study, she transferred to a university to return to her first love, Armenian Studies, which she decided to pursue at the undergraduate level. These roles of wife, mother, and member

of a college community have all helped shape the woman Lilit has become in America, just as she has in turned shaped those roles by giving them her own unique touch.

A Vegas Wedding in a Foreign Language

Nearly immediately after arriving in the United States, Lilit got married. Considering that her wedding did not include "300 or 400 people, people you never saw before" (Interview 5, August 1, 2012), this in itself was a break from Armenian convention. It was February, 1999, around the Chinese New Year, and one of the few English words Lilit knew at that time was "yes".

> So we went to Las Vegas and we got married. You know what's funny? I didn't understand any words in English, and if the lady [who married them] said bad words, even then we would say "yes". And we didn't have any money to stay there, so we got married and drove back. (Interview 5, August 1, 2012)

Part of Lilit's adjustment to living in America also involved finding a job, and as a new immigrant without English, she and her husband relied on his friends to help find an avenue for her to earn money. Her first work experience here was stereotypically exploitative; she worked four weeks in training without pay, expecting compensation later. When the time came for her to be hired as a regular employee, suddenly another employee came back from an absence, and Lilit was expected, for $90 a week, to do the same work as that employee did for $250. Her husband stepped in to gracefully decline:

> My husband said, you know, she's not coming back to work. She helped you, thank you very much, but she's not coming back. And they said, "Look at her! She just came to the United States from Armenia and she thought the dollars came in the tree." And I left that place. (Interview 2, July 11, 2012)

Her other work experience during this time was similarly problematic. Her next job was in a clothing factory cutting fabric in conditions with no windows, minimal light, and close quarters with the other workers. This was now about three months after her wedding, and she was pregnant with her first child and often nauseated, so she left the job to stay home and adjust to her pregnancy.

One day a friend called her to get her out of the house, and they walked over to a nearby discount store. Overheated and generally unwell, she fainted. She recalls that in this scary situation, she realized that she had somehow learned at least one important word in English:

> When I woke up, the fire department came and took me to the hospital. When I got there, I was waiting for my friend and the doctor came to ask me about something. I don't understand! I didn't know anything in English. They kept talking and I only understood, "Are you homeless?" I don't know why, but we talked about this word *homeless* before at a party. I said, "No! I'm not homeless!" And that doctor laughed and said he was joking, I think. He spoke in English and we just used like a sign to talk. (Interview 5, August 1, 2012)

In the months that followed, Lilit stayed home and befriended a neighbor, an older Armenian woman from Turkey who became like a mother to her. She made sure she was up and exercising during the pregnancy, took her to the store, and helped her cook meals for her and her husband. In January, 2000, her first son was born.

Motherhood: A Source of Language and Power

By the end of 2001, Lilit was 21 and the mother of two young sons. Lilit remarked that the gender of their children is something that made her husband proud; although she would like to have had a girl, Armenian men "are proud when they have boys because their last name is not

going to change when they get married" (Interview 4, July 25, 2012). Still, regardless of their shared joy upon becoming parents, Lilit and her husband continued to experience difficulties with work and finances after their children were born.

> It was very hard. My weight was 80 pounds because when my older one was sleeping, the other one woke up. When the older one woke up, my husband went to work — he had two jobs — so it was just me. My brother-in-law was staying with us then also, so it was just me to take care of two boys and two big men. (Interview 5, August 1, 2012)

She and her family were then accepted into the Section 8 housing program. After some initial hurdles, they finally found a landlord willing to accommodate them and in 2002, they moved into the apartment where they were still living at the time of this study. It was in this apartment that Lilit began raising her children and also restarted her college career.

When her sons were young, neither she nor her husband had begun studying English, so not surprisingly, the boys' initial home language was Armenian. That her children be raised in an environment rich with the Armenian language was an unquestionable priority for Lilit, one that she brought up on numerous occasions throughout her narrative retellings about raising her children.

> We are [a] very old people, our history is very old. We used to have a very big country, but we split it, and split it, and now, finally, we have just a small Armenia. And even though after Armenian genocide, everybody tried to change our language and our religion, we still want to keep whatever we have. For us, it's like gold, so we don't want to lose it… So I tell my children, "Even though you were born here, you have to show your first nationality. You have to know you are Armenian, and don't be shy. I want you to be proud to show your Armenian face." (Interview 7, August 15, 2012)

Without knowing English, Lilit essentially had no choice but to begin raising her children without it as well; still, her acquisition of English began before she started formal classes in the college setting largely because of her interactions with children at her sons' school, where she used to work as a volunteer.

I learned to speak when I went to work at their school. My friend was the principal's assistant, and so I helped in the office. But then my friend told me, "If you want to learn language, you have to talk with the kids. You can stay in the office, but you should go to the classroom." … So I went to the kindergarten classroom. I had no idea even about hide-and-seek! They played with each other and asked me, "Can we go to jungle gym?" "What is jungle gym?" I asked, and they showed me. They spoke exactly the language that I needed. First I learned language like that. (Interview 1, July 3, 2012)

Even after she started taking English classes, her children continued to be a source of knowledge about the language, just as she, speaking their *mother tongue*, served as their main source of knowledge about Armenian. After a while, though, the transition to English as one of the household languages became necessary as she started helping the kids with homework. When she would help them with math homework, for example, it was confusing to her sons for her to use Armenian terminology to explain math functions since they had learned math only in English. It was in this way that English became the language of school in their household, and Lilit says that even now, "usually we speak Armenian at home, but for the classes we do them together in English" (Interview 1, July 3, 2012).

As a mother of Armenian-English bilingual children, Lilit has adjusted to having English in place of Russian as the second language of her home. Still, it is important to her to retain her Russian language, which she has done so primarily through watching Russian television

channels. In fact, her fluency in Russian today gives her access to information that she says she might not otherwise receive, stating that her ability to watch Russian television channels provides her with more globally informative news coverage than what is available in the United States (Interview 2, July 11, 2012). This global knowledge is also something that she is proud to be able to share with her children, though they converse about it in English instead of Russian. While she also occasionally uses Russian when carrying out shopping duties at Russian markets, she says that she prefers to use her English in those settings; in the markets, neither she nor the vendors are first-language English speakers, so she, with her advanced formal education in English, is able to exercise some linguistic authority using her third language.

Besides Lilit's use of three languages, Lilit has had some empowering experiences that would not have otherwise been available to her as a mother in Armenia. For example, when her youngest son was born, she played a significant role in naming him after her father, even though "nobody in Armenia can name the sons unless they are the man, and you have to name them whatever the man wants" (Interview 4, July 25, 2012). Additionally, she has been able to exercise more control over how her sons are raised, including how they are punished when need be, than if they had been living in Armenia, where the husband and the husband's family can at times have more direct authority over the male children than the mother has.

Raising her children has always been a priority for Lilit, and something that has delegated other tasks, like working and going to school, to second or third place. However, in 2004, when she learned that she would be able to utilize the free childcare services offered at Fernando College while she pursued her education, she soon began on the next part of her trajectory, which started at Fernando and, at the time of this study, is now continuing at a major southern California university.

Becoming a Student Again

Although going to college was not, as Lilit perceived, a priority among most other Armenian immigrant women she knew, she yearned to go back to school not only to finish what she had started in Armenia, but also to learn English in a formal setting. Prior to starting at Fernando, her informal English studies involved working at her children's school, studying her husband's materials from a vocational school he was attending, and watching cartoons and other children's programming in English. To Lilit, English was the key to both a more active social life and a better-paying job:

> I was very active. I like to talk, I like having friends, so I was very stressed at that time, because if you don't know the language, you are nothing over here… If you don't speak English, the pay is very low, and I didn't want to go back somewhere to work for $90 a week. (Interview 6, August 8, 2012)

Lilit's recounting of her student life at Fernando was generally positive, despite citing a few experiences that were difficult and discouraging for her. For instance, one of her earliest classes was an ESL speech and articulation class taught by someone with whom she had immediate disagreements. Lilit described how this teacher openly shamed an elderly student for, as the teacher perceived, enrolling in classes for the sole purpose of receiving financial aid funds. Lilit was outraged at this show of disrespect and engaged the teacher in an argument. Later in the semester, the same teacher tried to explain her far-fetched expectation for Armenian students of all ages to be able to speak English without much of a foreign accent: Because the 39-character Armenian alphabet represents more sounds than the Latin alphabet, Armenian speakers should be able to produce more complex sounds than students of other language backgrounds and thus more readily reduce their accent. After Lilit continued to voice her dissenting opinion in class,

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she described the class to her husband, who questioned Lilit's resolve to argue with the teacher since Lilit "was not supposed to talk" (Interview 2, July 11, 2012) in defiance to a teacher.

The next stage of Lilit's college life began when she started working through the Federal Work Study program at Fernando, and her first position there as an office assistant, though confusing because of her lack of English, was nevertheless one where her supervisor appreciated her work ethic and burgeoning communication skills. After that work study ended, she became part of the California Work Opportunities and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program, a state-funded welfare-to-work program that assists financially disadvantaged parents of dependent children. This program referred her to work at the Fernando College Learning Center, where she began as an office assistant and advanced to a position as a tutor, and where she was still working at the time of this study.

When Lilit started working at the Learning Center, she says, she "was a different woman" (Interview 3, July 19, 2012). As a result of her time there, she learned how to "learn from mistakes" (Interview 3, July 19, 2012), but also, as a result of her training, work experience, and observation of other tutors and supervisors, she came to develop the academic habits of mind that she not only shared with her tutees but also used in her Fernando coursework and further plans to incorporate into her university studies. More importantly, although she started off at Fernando as an accounting major and still uses that knowledge in her tutoring position, she was encouraged in her work environment to pursue something that interested her intellectually, not just something that would be likely to land her a good job, and after seeing some commercials on an Armenian television channel for Armenian Studies programs at local universities, she ultimately decided to change her major back to the field she had started exploring before she immigrated to America.

Managing Expectations and Transformations

Lilit's difficulties upon her initial immigration were neither insurmountable nor unexpected. "Everybody had a hard time when they came," she explained matter-of-factly (Interview 5, August 1, 2012). The Armenian economy was suffering at the time she left, but she did not have in her mind a kind of dreamlike American mecca; on the contrary, she expected the transition to be difficult, stating that "it was very difficult, but I wasn't surprised" (Interview 5, August 1, 2012). What did surprise her years later, though, was the impressive amount of assistance offered to immigrants in California to undertake a community college education.

> I never thought that some college will let you have some government grants. I never thought the government can help you. Now I always tell Armenian immigrants that this country gives you a lot of chances. Now [in 2012] the economy is in a bad situation, but still you can go to school, you can have an education, and even for the kids, some people have the childcare program. The school can care for your children! (Interview 5, August 1, 2012)

Another unexpected result of her immigration has been the effect that English, her third language, has had on Russian, her second. Though she still prefers watching Russian language news programs to programs in English, more for their global viewpoints than for any linguistic leanings, she finds herself — to her surprise, in fact — using English when transacting business in the Russian markets. "I can read, I can write Russian. But if Russian people are working there, I like to speak with them in English" (Interview 2, July 11, 2012). She elaborated by explaining that she is now more used to the American system of measurements, so it is easier to order food in pounds rather than kilograms, for example, but the differing status of Russian and English among her languages is not reserved only for these types of exchanges.

One day my cousin sent me her address so I could send her some pictures of my children, some DVDs. I said, "Send your address," and she wrote everything in Russian. I know Russian letters, but I wrote her name in Armenian, and the address I wrote in English! But she wrote — I looked, it was Russian, every single letter was Russian, but I wrote English. It just [pause] came out! (Interview 3, July 19, 2012).

Despite that sense of shock she felt when English started to come more naturally to her than the second language she had studied and used extensively in Armenia, she has also had experiences in which her deliberate use of English has granted her a sense of authority that she did not have before. For example, on a visit back to Armenia in 2007, her husband's family had a guest from Malaysia who spoke English but not Armenian, and she assumed the role of interpreter. Lilit said that upon hearing her, "my father-in-law was sitting very proudly and saying, 'She's very smart!' I was happy that time, I was proud to know another language, not only Russian" (Interview 7, August 15, 2012). In America, too, exchanges with other Armenian women who are not as fluent in English have provided a boost to her self-regard, especially when they involve helping friends with tasks like filling out extensive paperwork or finding information on the computer, two areas Lilit knows she excels in. For example, during the summer of our interviews, one of her Armenian friends contacted her for help getting her daughter registered in classes at the same university Lilit was planning to start that Fall.

She [the daughter] could not- she didn't know how to do it. She told me, "I couldn't find any classes. I don't understand. How do I do that?" And they came. And so I help her. I showed how to go from portal to see the schedule. "This is your waiting list," I said, and she said, "These classes I couldn't register in." I said, "Because that class you have to first take this, then this, like the advisor told you." [She said] "I don't understand what

she said!" I said, "What language do you speak?" And she told me, "English. Oh, okay!" And then she said, "Oh, thank you very much, you explain to me, and I was crying," so I said, … "Calm down, it's easy! And then I showed the schedule… I told her, this is it, you just write it. Just read and click, read and click." (Interview 6, August 8, 2012)

Additionally, Lilit has even recently started experimenting with using English at parties with other Armenian people, a step she was very wary to take in the past because of her lack of self-confidence in English.

Lilit's experiences with authority in English have also been countered with times when, because of her English, her "power was less" (Interview 6, August 8, 2012). For example, during the summer of our interviews, Lilit went to meet with an administrator at her sons' school to work out some problems with her oldest son's upcoming year's schedule. His schedule was supposed to include gifted classes, but his placement test results had been misplaced and his classes were incorrectly assigned. Lilit said that when she is mad or confused, it is easy to forget English words, so her frustration during this meeting was compounded by a temporary inability to express herself clearly. Still, she knows that setbacks such as this are only temporary, and she is ultimately able to see great value in her multilingualism.

Lilit became an American citizen in 2007, and one of the biggest symbolic steps she has taken to cement her role as a full member of American society has been working as a volunteer at her local polling place on several past election days. "I am a good citizen," she stated (Interview 7, August 15, 2012), a role that for her is at least bilingual, since she also serves as a translator and assistant to other Armenian-speaking voters who are not as comfortable with English as she is. "I made a good decision," she summarizes on her decision to immigrate and on the life she has been able to create in America (Interview 5, August 1, 2012).

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Traveling Into the Future: To the University and Beyond

Lilit's descriptions of her future largely center around becoming educated at the university level, including her hopes and fears for herself at the university, as well as her goals for her children's education down the road. When the formal interview process for this study ended just before the Fall semester, 2012, Lilit, at age 32, was preparing to start her upper division coursework. This is nearly unheard of in her culture.

> If that was their decision, they would tell me to stay home, cook, wash, and take care of the kids. They would say, "You're never going to go to the university at your age. It's not important. You have to go when you are 17 or 18! At your age, you have to stay home and take care of your kids." (Interview 4, July 25, 2012)

Since her children are in school themselves, she can schedule her school and work obligations around them, something she has been doing since she began lower division courses at Fernando. Regardless of her solid planning, though, she still has fears about being able to finish her degree. However, after repeatedly citing fears about how her modest financial situation could get in the way of her goal, she talked about how she might even someday pursue a Master's degree in Armenian Studies at the university where she is completing her Bachelor's degree.

Her more immediate fears about completing university work center around her ability to write academic papers in English, since except for a few Armenian language classes, her courses in Armenian history and culture are all in English. Still, her academic work thus far, especially work focusing on metacognitive skills for both studying and tutoring, is something that she feels has prepared her well for more rigorous university courses. She explains, "When I read, I know how to find the important thing, main idea and supporting idea. If it's going to be like that, it will be much easier to write something" (Interview 6, August 8, 2012). Also, a few weeks before our

interviews concluded was when Lilit met with her friend's daughter to explain university registration procedures, and with details from that meeting in mind, Lilit declared, "I'm not scared about that. I saw what kind of people go to the university, even people who don't know how to use a computer like I do. That's familiar stuff for me" (Interview 6, August 8, 2012).

Looking further into the future, Lilit envisions her parents visiting America for the first time on her graduation day. This will be especially meaningful to her since both her mother and she put their postsecondary education on hold to get married and raise a family. She hopes that her university education will lead to a career in teaching Armenian at a school in the Los Angeles area, either in a heritage language classroom or in the new nearby charter school that educates all K-5 students in English, Armenian, and Spanish. She sees herself working part-time until her children grow up and maybe, just maybe, if circumstances ever require or allow it, moving back to Armenia to teach there.

Beyond her goals for her own education, Lilit also talked about what she wants for her children's futures. Her worries about financing her education are clearly tied to her hopes for sons; she doesn't want to go into debt to pay for her university work if it means that paying for her children's education will be even more difficult. She also foresees that she will not adhere to the Armenian tradition of having children live with their parents until the children themselves get married; she remarks, "I want them to go and have their own life. I can help them, but I want to have my own life too" (Interview 5, August 1, 2012).

Interpreting Lilit's Journey: Language, Culture, and Gender

Lilit's detailed recounting of her language and literacy history highlighted numerous instances of how her use of language(s) has either provided her with or stripped her of linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1991; Flowerdew & Miller, 2008). As a first grader, she learned that clear and

uniform penmanship was one of the first steps toward academic acceptance in school; as a second grader, she had a similar experience in which a standard, specific accent when speaking Russian was held up as the ideal, and anything differing from that was admonished and *other*ed. That second grade memory of accent shaming has stayed with her through adulthood, as seen in her preference for English when she frequents her local Russian markets. Still, though she feels compelled to use English because of how others might judge her use of Russian, this use of English is in itself a kind of exercise of linguistic authority, as she sees her English as at least equal to, perhaps superior to, the English used by the Russian vendors.

The authority in English that Lilit is able to exercise in select settings also intertwines with her gendered identity as an Armenian wife and mother. For example, as a wife, she clearly understood the respect her English language granted her when her father-in-law, with whom she has not always gotten along well, expressed pride at her ability to translate for their Malaysian houseguest. She also regularly uses her English to complete some of the household jobs she holds as the woman of the house, such as doing the everyday shopping and taking care of the bills and other family paperwork that is only provided in English. As a mother, she accepts and takes pride in the duty prescribed by her culture to raise the children, which includes coaching them through their English-language schoolwork; without a significant amount of control over the English language, that coaching would be problematic. This is not to suggest, however, that her maternal duties, when carried out in English, do not sometimes meet challenges, as illustrated by Lilit's exchange with the administrator at her sons' school.

Lilit's narrative shows instances of how she has consistently defied some of the long-held cultural expectations placed on her as an Armenian woman, from her exercising choice in her clothing as a child, to deciding to immigrate to America as a young adult and get married to a

man her parents had never met, to her being adamant about choosing the name of her second son. At least these first two events likely occurred largely because of her supportive parents, but the latter could not have taken place without her being confident enough to claim a power that other women in her culture often do not even hint at exercising. Her wedding is also an example of Lilit following her own self-determined path, one that has often veered slightly to significantly from what is expected of an Armenian woman. Though American popular culture may be rife with stories of couples running off to Vegas to get hitched, this is not something common among Armenians now, and was likely even less so in 1999, fewer than ten years after the Armenian nation itself claimed independence.

Although being in America has given Lilit some freedom that she would not have otherwise had if she were under the thumb of the cultural expectations (and, she says, of her in-laws) in Armenia, she mentioned throughout her narrative that her independent character had emerged long before she immigrated. This is evident in her stories of childhood shopping and curfews, her outspoken role as the principal's *de facto* assistant in her last year of high school, and her choosing to marry a boyfriend in America rather than being set up with suitors by male family members in Armenia. While she still carries household and child-rearing responsibilities traditionally ascribed to females, she has been able to claim some power from those responsibilities. After all, these duties make her ultimately responsible for the money in the house, even if she is not the primary breadwinner, and having to raise the children means that she has a strong voice in their growing up to be men who respect both their Armenian identity and the more equal roles that women have in American society.

CHAPTER FIVE

MAZAR

I wanted to be independent, as my country.

Mazar, aged 62-63 during this study, was born in Yerevan, Armenia, in 1950. After graduating from an Armenian university in 1972, she worked as a radio and film producer throughout the republics of the USSR, traveled and worked extensively with her French language after the 1991 Armenian declaration of independence, and then immigrated to the United States in the middle of 2001. A descendant of survivors of the Genocide, she speaks Armenian, Russian, French, and English, has two grown children, and lives with her husband in an Armenian enclave in Los Angeles County. Among the participants, she was the second to immigrate to America, so her narrative appears here second; of all of the participants' narratives, hers is the one which most directly highlights how her multilingualism helped empower her as a woman, providing her sustenance and independence in the years immediately following the fall of the Soviet Union. Her immigration story also calls attention to the sacrifices she made to start her life anew and eventually, in her sixties, come to hold dual Armenian and American citizenship.

Traveling Through the Past: From Genocide to Independence

Like the histories of many survivors of the Armenian Genocide, Mazar's story begins long before her birth. Although our interviews were primarily about the many facets of her multilingual life history, it was valuable to her to recount her family's story, even in the small or hazy amount of detail that remains from her collective memory nearly one hundred years after the first deportations. These memories also sparked some important connections for her between elements of her cultural and linguistic identity.

Mazar's great-grandfather died heroically in Van, Turkey, as part of the resistance against the Ottoman Empire; his wife, Mazar's great-grandmother and namesake, survived the more than 100-mile trek from Van to Mount Ararat to what is now Armenia, but she lost "two or three children on the way" (Interview 1, July 5, 2012). Mazar described the story she had heard countless times before from her grandmother:

> [My great-grandmother] couldn't have all these children while she walked, so she lost — some. She had to leave them on the road, and she said to her sister-in-law, "Take my child." Later, when they met each other again, she said, "Where is my child?" Her sister-in law said, "I couldn't. I had my own." And they were gone, and the children that she lost, now in the family, we have these names. My name is the name of my great-grandmother, but my cousin has the name of a child that she lost. Like that, they — *ressusciter. Oui, à l'honneur, ressusciter*[10] in the newborn child, always they gave these names. (Interview 5, July 31, 2012)

The two remaining children from this branch of the family were Mazar's grandmother and great aunt. This grandmother, the mother of her father, would grow up to marry her grandfather who was born in 1900, orphaned during the Genocide in 1914, and himself became a famous historian, novelist, poet, and chronicler of his generation.

Within a few years of the deportations, Armenia became a republic of the Soviet Union, and both Russian and Armenian had been established as the home languages of Mazar's household by the time she was born in 1950. Russian was the mandatory language of the Empire

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[10] French for *resuscitate*. In other words, her family resuscitated those who died in the deportations by naming the newborns *à l'honneur de*, or *in honor of* them. Knowing my familiarity with the French language, Mazar sometimes used French words during her interviews. In many cases, this one included, the French words were close to their English cognates. In interview excerpts that follow, French-to-English translations are provided only in cases where the French word is not the expected English cognate.

as well as the language of prestige and higher education; "if you continued your education, you continued in Russia," Mazar said (Interview 2, July 12, 2012). In addition to studying Russian, though, her family placed great emphasis on maintaining Armenian, a language that tied the legacy of the Genocide to subsequent generations. Under the Russian system, families were able to choose which language children would be educated in during their early school years, but her grandfather, the Genocide survivor, narrowed that choice to only one:

> He said, "Because you are Armenian, you have to go and learn well your language first. No Russian, or Russian only after Armenian." He said, "If you go to Russian school, you are not anymore my granddaughter." He said that! (Interview 2, July 12, 2012)

So Armenian school it was, where Armenian was the primary language and Russian the second; children were also required to study a third language from the age of seven, and Mazar chose French, a language which would later come to play a vital and nurturing role in her adult life.

To School in Three Alphabets

Mazar started school at age seven, and she remembers herself from that time on as a "conscientious pupil" (Interview 6, August 9, 2012). "I loved to go to school, and when I was sick, and they said, 'Stay home,' I cried, 'No! Let's go, I want to go!'" (Interview 5, July 31, 2012). She recalls her standard issue uniform, red kerchief, and satchel, along with the pen and ink that she still associates with learning the print and cursive alphabets in both Armenian and Russian.

> It was ink! And this ink — purple color ink. For this ink, we had a small bag. And I would put this ink in this bag. Ink! And you had to walk so that the ink doesn't shake… [gesturing] and you go to the ink, open it, and put the pen on the ink. You can't imagine.

And my time, first we learn the letters, the alphabet. We learned handwriting[11], you

know, [cursive]. Now we don't do that. Very beautiful! (Interview 6, August 9, 2012)

Much like Lilit's story of learning penmanship much later in the Soviet system, Mazar also

recalled the emphasis that was placed on writing neatly and uniformly. "You could spend one

whole page to write *la lettre* 'A'! It was a ceremony to learn the language, and it was everything,

the writing and handwriting" (Interview 6, August 9, 2012). In addition to handwriting, all of her

language studies during her years "in school[12], in university, everywhere" also placed a great

deal of emphasis on "the notion of dictation, [which] means, I have a text, the teacher dictates,

and the student writes" (Interview 3, July 17, 2012). This physical, written evidence of

knowledge of language through its literacy is a concept that has followed her into her adult years.

As Mazar progressed through her school years, her respect and love for education grew,

and she spoke fondly and proudly about the fact that she had received a rigorous and high-quality

education under the Soviet system. She related a large part of this memory to her childhood

feelings about teachers.

> For us, the teachers — I was remembering the other day — when I was young, the
>
> teachers were angels! They were someone special, teacher! They don't eat, they don't go
>
> to bathroom. They are angels. They don't walk, they fly! We had respect toward the
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> teachers. Teachers were the highest people, somebody you respect. And I never had bad
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> teachers, because my relationships are always very good with them. I know what they
>
> like. (Interview 3, July 17, 2012)

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[11] In Mazar's lexicon, the term *handwriting* refers to cursive rather than print writing.
[12] In Mazar's lexicon, *school* refers to the Soviet Union's ten mandatory years of education from
childhood through adolescence; postsecondary studies are referred to as *university*.

While school for Mazar is associated with this profound regard for teachers, it is also deeply connected to the beginning of Mazar's studies of the French language. Over time, what began as a compulsory foreign language at the age of seven became much, much more. She elaborated, "Since that first day of class when the teacher came in and started to speak French, this language became my big love, and until now. If you ask me, you have big love? Yes. Yes, it's the French language" (Interview 1, July 5, 2012). This love carried her into her university work, where she majored in French. Speaking Armenian and Russian in her daily home and school life and using French in her major coursework, Mazar lived truly trilingually throughout her university years, at least as much as living in the Soviet Union permitted. Though holding a job during university studies was not as common as it is today, Mazar worked during summers as a French interpreter in East Germany and other areas of the eastern bloc in the early seventies; it was in this position that she first experienced a financial reward, in the form of a state-issued paycheck, resulting from her multilingualism. That said, after her summer work with the tourists ended, so did her life with French, at least for a while:

> I spoke French very well, but it was a foreign language in the Soviet Union, and the Soviet Union was a closed country, iron curtains. I never used this French language after I finished the university. Nowhere. I couldn't go to France. I couldn't speak French to French people who were coming to Armenia. Why not? KGB! KGB, yeah! You couldn't! You couldn't! (Interview 6, August 9, 2012)

Her university studies ended in early twenties, but she would later revive her bond with the French language when she reunited with it after Armenian independence in 1991. In the interim was her adult life in the Soviet Union.

Adulthood, Take One: Behind the Iron Curtain

After her university graduation in 1972, Mazar began her career as a television journalist and producer for the single channel that broadcast in the Soviet Union, and she held this job until the Soviet collapse. Her work involved extensive travel in nearly all of the fifteen Soviet republics, including a lot of time spent in Moscow, St. Petersburg, and other major Russian cities. Mazar's reflections on life in the USSR are positive, yet practical; "I was happy," she said (Interview 5, July 31, 2012). "I had a good life when I was young. I can't say that I was unhappy. The only bad thing was you couldn't go abroad. KGB, KGB everywhere. You couldn't speak to foreign person there" (Interview 5, July 31, 2012). That lack of freedom, though, was replaced with another meaning of *free*:

> Education, medicine, health — I remember one thing, they were free! No bills. Can you
>
> imagine that? No bills! It was communism, real communism! We didn't feel bad, we just
>
> lived in that one moment, without knowing. No bills, nothing. Education cost, nothing. I
>
> had surgeries. I didn't pay. (Interview 6, August 9, 2012)

Mazar's narrative of her adult life in the Soviet Union was also peppered with early recollections about diplomatic relations with the United States, recollections which would also come to shape her ideas about America before she immigrated. One of her most prominent memories was from 1959, when her grandmother took her to the opening of the American National Exhibition in Moscow. Her historical and sensory perspectives of America were shaped by two things that day: seeing Vice President Richard Nixon and tasting Pepsi Cola for the first time.

> We were somewhere in a park, waiting for America, our enemy, capitalist! And I
>
> remember Nixon. My grandmother took me to this exhibition and we were like, Oh!
>
> What is this? America! America, and I remembered Pepsi Cola there. They were giving it

free, Pepsi Cola, and it was something American. Really American! (Interview 4, July 26,

2012)

This memory stuck with her when, by way of an invitation from her sister, her status as a

journalist, and some sheer luck with securing traveling papers, she was granted permission to

visit the United States in 1983. Her vision of America then expanded from Nixon and Pepsi to

cowboy hats and country music. She giddily recalled:

There was a man, blond! Blond hair, hat, everything. Country music. We danced, and he

went to the microphone, and I remember what he said. He said, "We have in this

restaurant, in this room, a representative of the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union!" [She

gestured like he was flexing his muscles.] The Soviet Union was a powerful country.

Now it's nothing, but at the time, America, Soviet Union, two powerful countries,

enemies! And everybody heard his announcement. It was the Cold War, and I was proud

to be there from Soviet Union. (Interview 4, July 26, 2012)

Another of Mazar's most potent memories from her adult life in the Soviet Union, one

that also relates to her past and current use of her multiple-language literacies, is one that is

likely familiar to the pre-Internet generations in other areas of the world. In her day, she

explained, except for the channel where she worked, there was no TV and certainly no Internet,

so her daily life very much revolved around going to the mailbox to pick up the numerous

newspapers and magazines to which she subscribed. "The *tertes* [newspapers, Armenian

transliteration] were the source, like the Internet today. It was the source of information for

educated people. We needed to know what was going on not only in Armenia but in Russia, in

the world" (Interview 3, July 17, 2012). That she also contributed to that knowledge via her work

as a multilingual journalist and producer was something that would later facilitate her ability to survive in post-independent Armenia.

During her adult life in the Soviet Union, Mazar took at least two steps — though perhaps not many more — in the direction of tradition for Armenian women: She married young, at the age of twenty, and promptly had two children. As she described this time in her life, she remarked that Armenia back then, even more so than now, was a patriarchy. She was married for about twenty years, and her comments about this husband were brief, summarized respectfully as an experience that was "very bad" (Interview 4, July 26, 2012) during a period of time when, if you were a woman, "you had to listen to the man" (Interview 7, August 16, 2012). As she entered her forties in the early 1990s, she found herself struggling in an abusive marriage at the same time as the Soviet Union was struggling under the weight of socialism, and the amenities that everyone once enjoyed were becoming less abundant. Under these conditions, she took a step that even today is almost unspeakable in Armenian society: She divorced.

Adulthood, Take Two: Independence for Armenia, Independence for Mazar

Mazar's divorce came at around the same time as the Armenian declaration of independence in late 1991, and the connection between these two events is no coincidence. As Mazar proudly stated during our discussion of that period in her life, "I wanted to be independent, as my country" (Interview 2, July 12, 2012). Though she had to that point taken some of the steps of a traditional woman's path by marrying and becoming a mother, she explained that throughout her life, she had always been independent; by divorcing her husband, she could finally begin to express this independence, which would spark an even more vibrant career as she blazed paths that had previously been accessible only to men in her culture.

Even when I was younger, I was a very strong person. My sister was not, but my mother

always was defending her. I would say to her, "Why don't you say I'm your daughter?"

She said, "No, you are not like my daughter, you are like my son." It's because I was

strong. In everything I was doing, it was unusual. I was always independent. Especially

when I divorced (*laughter*)! (Interview 2, July 12, 2012)

Soon after independence, the foreign embassies began to open in Armenia, first the

American and then the French; it was at this time that Mazar's university education in French,

which had ended nearly twenty years before, stepped in to help shape her future. As a journalist

and French speaker, Mazar went to the embassy to learn more about how things were being

established in the new Armenia; the ambassador, also a woman, was impressed with Mazar's

journalism credentials and French language proficiency, and by the following week, Mazar's life

was on a new course. After some initial hesitation, Mazar accepted an offer to attend a training

session in Paris for the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Her fear of arriving alone in a strange

place was soon quelled when, to her surprise, she was greeted by none other than the French

equivalent of the Secretary of State.

At that moment, my French language helped me to feel that I am citizen of Armenia. I

was representing Armenia! And I was speaking French, that's why. What I want to say is

that everything was because of my French language. (Interview 1, July 5, 2012)

For the next ten years, Mazar recreated herself in her third language. Shortly after the

advent of her association with the French Foreign Ministry, she began a television project for

France Deux (French channel two) that would continue until her immigration to the United

States. Unfettered by Soviet travel restrictions, she worked to document the Armenian

experience in the diaspora, including France and other European areas as well as Syria, Lebanon,

Turkey, and other west Asian areas with Armenian settlements. In spite of this newfound

freedom, though, she did not want to abandon the new yet struggling Armenia, and she was able

to maintain work there through her French language connections.

> I was one French speaking woman in Armenia. It's not like in all of Armenia everyone
>
> speaks French. No! I was among maybe ten or fifteen, so I could survive because of this
>
> French language. Armenia had a very difficult time after independence. We didn't even
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> have electricity, and there was the war with Azerbaijan, but I never felt that! I never felt
>
> the difficulties because I was working with French people in the French center in
>
> Armenia. I worked at this center with my French language as a translator for some
>
> specialists. I translated different subjects, like marketing, banking. Banking! What is
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> banking? What is a bank? We didn't know! We didn't have before! (Interview 1, July 5,
>
> 2012)

Through one of these translating assignments, she learned of an open position for the

Director of the *Groupement Interprofessionel International Arménien* (Group of

Interprofessional International Armenians, or GIIA). Although she was originally not taken

seriously because the hiring manager said the organization was specifically seeking a man for the

position, she was able to convince the man in charge of her superior qualifications, the most

important of which was her advanced proficiency in French. So once again, her French language

helped secure her employment; "my French language fed me," she said (Interview 2, July 12,

2012. As part of this organization, she participated in numerous French-led efforts to quite

literally build the new independent Armenia, including construction projects for the growing

embassy and French-speaking schools[13]. As these sites for educating children in French were established, Mazar also saw an opportunity to create new French-language sites for adults, primarily to accompany the presence of French speaking businessmen in the new Armenia. Toward this end, she created French classes for a university in the capital, Yerevan; and in 1992, she designed and opened a school for teaching business French to adults, a school in which she played an active role until she left for America in 2001.

Mazar's professional accomplishments were accompanied by her involvement in several non-governmental organizations and associations, all of which helped her to forge her Armenian identity in her multiple languages. As an active member of these associations, she was usually one of only two or three other females. For example, she elaborated on her time with the Armenian Rotary Club:

> We were, I think, three women in my time. But I mean we were like "men-women" because we had our work, our behavior. Me and the others, we were very good. We said, yes, I am woman, by sex, but with my work, what I am doing, I am like a man [she gestures to flex muscles and show strength]. I am like a man, I have my voice, I am independent. (Interview 5, July 31, 2012)

By the turn of the millennium, Mazar was 50 years old and had reached the top of her professional career. She was earning a sizeable income, enough to buy her apartment, a personal, private possession that just ten years earlier in the Soviet Union would have been impossible; even in the new Armenia, a divorced, French-speaking woman with a flourishing career and such

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[13] Before Armenian independence, it was standard practice for all schoolchildren to be educated in Armenian, Russian, and a foreign language. Choices for foreign languages included English, German, and French. This practice continued after Armenian independence, and although the emphasis today is more on ensuring everyone learns English, in the early 1990s, French-language schools were still relatively popular.

a symbol of wealth was, as Mazar stated, "unique" (Interview 2, July 12, 2012). "I had always my voice. I wasn't typical for Armenia" (Interview 7, August 16, 2012). With these accomplishments in hand, she decided to dramatically switch gears and begin preparations to immigrate to America, where her grown children had already moved some years before with their father. She took a quick course in basic English from the British Embassy in Armenia, and on June 6, 2001, she once again set forth on a new path by moving to America.

Traveling to the Present, or Adulthood, Take Three: Mazar in America

In mid-2001, at the urging of her children and amid the declining economy and political situation in Armenia, Mazar pulled up stakes and moved to America. After feeling strong and independent in Armenia, arriving in the United States without English was quite a change. "When I came to America, you can't imagine from what height, I fell to — not zero, below zero! Because no English" (Interview 2, July 12, 2012). She continued:

> When you are coming here and you don't speak English, it's very bad. The first thing is
> that you have to speak English, and you have to be young, and I wasn't young. I was 51.
> You don't know what to do until you learn English here. You feel that from somewhere
> high, you fell. (Interview 4, July 26, 2012)

She spent her first three years in America in New York, where her prior experience in Armenian television helped her land work, without English, in the city of Saratoga. These years of adjustment were generally difficult; beyond that, Mazar's story of her life in America did not really begin to take shape until 2004, when she reunited with a friend from her early adult years. As she prefaced her description of this reunion, she said, "If I tell all these love stories, you will cry. People like when I say about what he did! Yes, they like, yes! If you want to see a happy woman, it's me" (Interview 4, July 26, 2012). In our next meeting, she explained:

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He was always my friend, this man. We knew each other from 1972, and it was good to

have man for a friend when you are young. One day in New York, he called me and said,

"I have a business trip to Fashion Week" — he is a cameraman, and he had come from

Los Angeles to New York for Fashion Week… So I went to the hotel, he set everything

[up], and I had the days off. And on the evening of this day, he came, he opened the door,

tired, and just said, "Oh! Hello, how are you?" And then he came, he [she gestures like he

gets on his knees]… like that, he said, "I love you. My whole life, I loved you. You

didn't pay attention to me. I want to be with you, and die with you. My last years, I want

to be happy." And you know what happened? I couldn't be on my feet. I didn't feel my

feet. I said, "Okay! Let's try this love." What is love? Because my first love, I used to

love my first husband, but it was like disaster for me. And from that day until today, it

was 2004, we are together. (Interview 5, July 31, 2012)

Her husband's career was in Los Angeles, so without strong ties keeping her in New

York, Mazar moved to California. The change of location accompanied a significant change in

her role as well; whereas her life in Armenia was one built on her independence and ability to

support herself, she was content with being in a position that, though dependent in many ways on

her eventual proficiency in English, relied on her husband's job for an income stream. "He has

enough work in the Armenian community, fortunately," she said (Interview 5, July 31, 2012). In

addition to accepting less financial responsibility in her relationship, she has also, without much

ado, assumed a position as a female that is much different from the more powerful one she had in

Armenia. She reflected:

The kind of woman as I was, we are different. But not now. Now, I am woman again I

think. Yes, I decided to be a woman for my husband, just a woman. I want him to feel

like a man, and I am woman. He earns money. My job is to clean, to do the shopping. I'm

old! No more energy. (Interview 4, July 26, 2012)

Her voice becomes nostalgic in her description of this contrast, but she is pleased with where she

is now in her relationship. "I had an active life. Now I want to, like, *se reposer* (French, to rest).

Have a quiet life. I'm tired" (Interview 5, July 31, 2012). Still, while Mazar's gendered identity

as a wife may be less active today than the identity she forged for herself in Armenia, after

nearly ten years in California, she has acquired at least one possession that her husband has not:

her English language.

Mazar in California: Becoming Quadrilingual

After working with minimal English for a few years in New York, Mazar decided to

begin the journey to English after she moved with her husband to California. Though it is indeed

possible to make a living without English in America — her husband has been doing it since he

arrived in 1998 — she summarized her reasoning behind starting to learn English in her fifties:

"If you want to be in real American society, to speak with American people, you have to speak

English" (Interview 5, July 31, 2012); not only that, she knew that Los Angeles was a diverse

and multicultural setting, and that she would need English as a shared language to communicate

with people who were themselves transplants from other national and linguistic backgrounds.

Her formal study of English began in earnest in the Spring semester of 2006, when she

enrolled in the first of a six-level series of ESL courses at Fernando College. With her existing

love and respect for teachers, she found the transition back to the classroom a relatively easy one,

and she described her experiences during this time with fondness. From her level-one course that

focused on basic aural and oral skills, to her level-six course geared toward academic literacy for

college level work, Mazar was successful in her English classes. She credited her success to

having been a "conscientious pupil" (Interview 6, August 9, 2012) all her life, coupled with her being "open to languages" (Interview 5, July 31, 2012); despite bemoaning her age upon starting classes as something that could have gotten in the way of her English acquisition, she knew that the experience from those years was something that would ultimately be to her benefit.

Following her success in ESL courses, Mazar went on to enroll in college-level English, on her way to eventually earning an Associate of Arts degree in French in 2010. As Mazar described her four years of formal English studies, she regularly made reference to the importance of attention to standard, correct features while acquiring a new language, and to some of the differences she saw between her American and Armenian experiences with education. The most striking difference she saw was the lack of emphasis on dictation in the American language classroom; instead of the word- and sentence-level scrutiny she had been accustomed to while studying her first three languages, most American English teachers focused instead on essays and larger, more holistic ways of assessing language production. She adapted well to this approach, agreeing that "the most important part [of language] is not to only write well; the most part is [getting] enrichment" (Interview 2, July 12, 2012). Nevertheless, having attended carefully to formal features of mechanics and grammar in her other language studies, she expressed a desire to master those formal features in English too, regardless of what little importance some others may have placed on them; toward that end, she fully expected teachers to correct her grammar and mechanics when writing in English, and in cases where they didn't, she engaged the services of English tutors to perfect the surface features of written work. This mastery for her was a symbol of respect for the English language and for the English-speaking country that she had decided to call home.

Besides the need to learn English as a means of communication and of showing respect to America, Mazar also highlighted how learning English helped her to perform some of the duties she assumed as a wife. Since her husband's job does not require English, he has not yet taken steps to learn it; without the ability to understand or read English signage, he does not drive, so Mazar is the driver of the house. This mobility, which carries with it a responsibility to her husband to drive, shop, and do other daily tasks that require English, is also key to her maintaining some sense of independence, since she can drive, go to the doctor, and converse with people outside of the Armenian community without a guide or translator. As the wife and language broker, she is the English speaker and translator, and this has afforded her some freedom that her husband, though bilingual in Armenian and Russian, still lacks.

During her time as an English language learner at Fernando, Mazar also returned to her "big love" (Interview 1, July 5, 2012), the French language; at the same time that she was starting English classes, she decided to go through the sequence of French classes at Fernando as a way of reconnecting with the language that had sustained her throughout her years of independence in Armenia. After completing the first two semesters, her French language once again served as a source of income, however scant compared to what she had earned in Armenia, when she began working for the Fernando College Learning Center as a French tutor. This job, a part-time position that lasted from 2007 until 2011, also entailed some teaching assistant duties for one of the French professors, and their friendship developed as Mazar participated in the weekly French-speaking gatherings that the professor coordinated. Throughout these years at Fernando, Mazar also occasionally worked as a substitute and assistant teacher at a K-12 French-language private school in Los Angeles. Perhaps, had she been offered a more regular position at that school years earlier, she may have accepted it; however, when that possibility arose in 2010,

she decided against it. "The timing decided for me what to do. I was not young, and this school is difficult with children" (Interview 4, July 26, 2012).

Timing had a few other effects on Mazar in 2010, besides her work at the French school. First, in that year, after nine years in the United States, Mazar became an American citizen. "For me it's very symbolic… to be a citizen, to have a passport, to speak English" (Interview 2, July 12, 2012). Her recollections about becoming a citizen took her back to that day in 1959 when she saw Richard Nixon and tasted America for the first time. "Could you imagine that after this year [1959], when I first *degusté* [French, tasted] Pepsi, one day I will be a citizen of this country? You see, life is very interesting!" (Interview 4, July 26, 2012). She differentiates this feeling from the one she had upon merely being a resident in America:

> I became a real member of this society. You are citizen, this is not green card, you know. This is different. You have your passport, and you are very proud when you are citizen. Then you feel that this country accepted you as a person. I wanted to come here, I started from zero. I fell — I fell, not on the ground, no. Below zero, below. And I feel okay now. I feel part of this country, this powerful country. That's why it's very symbolic for me, to have this passport, to be a part [of it], and to speak English. (Interview 3, July 17, 2012)

The second effect of timing in 2010 was her trip that year back to Armenia. Though she has maintained dual citizenship, she chose to use her American passport for her travel visa on that trip. She understood during that visit that despite her strong feelings about her new home, she still felt fully Armenian. She landed in her homeland that day with a spirited sense of pride for becoming a citizen of the United States, her deep feelings for Armenia, and her *Armenité*, as she called it (Interview 1, July 5, 2012), adopting a potent and useful French term for *Armenian identity*.

The Mazar of Today

Mazar's life today is generally one of repose and reflection, and one that she characterizes as fully, seamlessly quadrilingual. "My life is totally based on these four languages that I use at the same time, by switching from one language to another softly. This is me," she wrote (Daily Language and Literacy Log, July 11, 2012). With regard to spoken language, her Armenian language is in full use at home, where she uses it as one of the primary languages of communication with her husband; since she lives in Glendale, home to a large Armenian heritage population, she uses Armenian to carry out many of her daily business in local shops there. Ever conscious of her desire to keep her languages active, she also speaks Russian with her husband at home, and is even able to use it as a kind of secret language during some outings in her neighborhood, where most of the Armenians are also Farsi speakers from Iran, not Russian bilinguals. She speaks French during gatherings hosted by her former Fernando professor and occasionally when conversing with friends in both America and Armenia, and she feels rejuvenated when in the company of French speakers, who for her represent a cultured, highly educated, and sophisticated class of people; English is used in her other daily activities.

Mazar's life in four languages is not confined only to conversation or speaking; she has also happily maintained a close relationship with her languages via daily reading of print and websites, as well as regular viewing of multilingual movies on the Internet. While there is minimal print or film material available in Armenian, she still occasionally reads Armenian newspapers and finds information on Armenian language websites. She reads in Russian on the Internet as well as in print publications available from her neighborhood newsstand (see Figure 5); doing the daily Russian crossword puzzle with her husband is an activity that she cherishes and identifies as something that is bound to keep her brain healthy as she ages. She further names

Figure 5. A sample of some of Mazar's daily reading material. This includes a novel in French and a weekly newspaper in Russian. Photo taken by me during Interview 2, July 12, 2012.

Russian as her preferred "movie language" (Interview 4, July 26, 2012) and has found a number

of websites that feature Russian-language films, "one million and billion films for me,"

(Interview 3, July 17, 2012) both those originally made in Russian and countless more

subsequently dubbed in it. She reads books, magazines and websites in French and often watches

movies in French as well, and she cannot help but come across English-language stories on the

web and on radio stations, in addition to daily contact with English on signs, in newspapers, and

in her mail. Drawing a clear connection between languages and the cultural and national links

they evoke, she said, "I also watch American movies, French movies. I like to watch every

country's movie… to see what they do. French, Italian, Indian movies, Chinese, Iranian movies,

they are good! Very good things. You have to see how they live" (Interview 3, July 17, 2012).

Finally, then, reflecting on Mazar's daily routines in America, her own words in English are the best means to summarize her life in many languages:

> So I am totally multilingual, or quadrilingual, and from one language to other language, oral (verbal) or written, it is done softly, naturally. And this is amazing! I never translate in my head the words or phrases from Armenian into Russian, French, or even English. I think and I speak and write fully in these languages. (Daily Language and Literacy Log, July 6, 2012)

Traveling Into the Future: *On Vivra, On Verra*

During our interviews, Mazar rarely made reference to the future. Regarding goals for her education, she mentioned wanting to finish some transfer units at Fernando and continuing with formal study of her fifth language, Italian, which she had been studying for two semesters as of Summer, 2012. Having lived a life of travel in her earlier years, she made note of her desire to someday see Moscow again, and perhaps to "travel more because the earth is very interesting" (Interview 6, August 9, 2012). She also talked briefly about her husband's future, and wondered if he might someday learn English enough to become a citizen. As an older woman expecting some of the health issues that come with advancing age, she brought up the idea of being eligible for Medicare in a few years, and how that might ease some of the problems associated with her securing private insurance. She was also forthcoming about facing her mortality, as she explained:

> Someday, I would like to die in Armenia and be cremated there, but it's not in the Armenian traditions. For me, I was born from nothing. I want to be ashes and [gestures like throwing ashes in the air] everywhere, everywhere. I don't want to go under the ground. (Interview 7, August 16, 2012)

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Her lack of reference to the future is not necessarily something that is due to her age; more so, it seems attached to her approach toward daily life, one that emphasizes living in the present since she rarely if ever knows what the future will bring. She used a French phrase to elucidate this philosophy:

On vivra, on verra. We will live, and we will see. Let's wait. If… I ask you to do something tomorrow, and you don't know what to say to me, I say, okay, *on vivra, on verra*. So tomorrow will come, and then we'll see what to do… Don't try to force the events, especially for tomorrow. You can't know what will be tomorrow. Nobody knows. (Interview 3, July 17, 2012)

And so for Mazar's future, she shall wait and see, and so, it seems, shall we.

Interpreting Mazar's Journey: Language, Culture, and Gender

Beginning with Mazar's earliest forays into formal language studies, she has experienced some degree of attention to and emphasis on standard features of her different languages, from learning "handwriting" (cursive writing) in Armenian to seeking out the services of English tutors to ensure that her college writing was error-free; presenting "perfect" work to teachers was a sign of respect for them and for the language used in that work. In all of her languages, then, Mazar drew a strong connection between knowledge of a language and knowledge of its literacy; though it may be possible to orally communicate in a language, it is only through formal study and writing, coupled with cultural and personal interaction, that a person can come to feel that a language is his or her own, as she feels all four of her languages are, to varying extents, *hers*.

Mazar's narrative also conveys a strong sense of how her languages are connected to the geographical locations where she has learned and used them most. Her Armenian language ties her to her homeland, as first asserted by her grandfather, who insisted that she attend Armenian

rather than Russian school; the Russian language, while something Mazar enjoys in the United States via print materials and free Internet media, still reminds her of her time in the Soviet Union; the French language is accompanied by the culture of France, a symbol of sophistication and advanced education; English is the language of America, and it is often through the English language that she is able to express respect toward this country that has taken her in and, as she said, accepted her as one of its own.

Since her early adulthood, Mazar's multilingualism has been more than a source of pride; it has been key to her independence and survival, from the brief time she was able to earn money in the Soviet Union as a French translator, to when her French language "fed" her in her work life after Armenian independence. Although now her languages are not nearly as significant a source of economic capital as they once were, they fill her days as she spends time reading, watching movies, and surfing the Internet. Her position as the sole English speaker in her home deems her the language broker of the family, and while this does not carry the prestige or symbolic capital that she had in Armenia, it certainly adds to her cache of cultural/linguistic capital in America. Furthermore, her reflections on her daily, seamless use of her four languages indicate how much of her identity, regardless of her geographical location, is also defined by her multilingualism.

Mazar's narrative of life in four languages shows how her languages are inextricably linked to aspects of her multi-faceted cultural identity as well as to her experiences as an adult woman in the Soviet Union, independent Armenia, and America. She first experienced this link when attending Armenian school at her grandfather's insistence, so as not to cut the all-important thread tying her to her Armenian background. As she relayed the story of tasting Pepsi in the Soviet Union, her English-language narrative was regularly infused with French words, as was

her retelling of when she visited the United States in the eighties and stood out as a symbol of the Soviet Union for the man in the country bar who announced her presence there, something unusual for both parties during the strained and stressful period of the Cold War.

Mazar's stories also highlight how unique it was in her time not only for someone to speak French and make a living from it, but also for that person to be a woman, a woman who came to hold positions that only men were expected to take on. Her strength and independence were traits associated only with men then, such that even her retelling of her story involves describing herself as being like a man, with the role of woman, as she saw it, coming naturally to her only after her career ended and she became a wife to her second husband. As a wife, she uses English to take care of many of her American household responsibilities, including driving and shopping; most importantly for her, English has given her the key to her American citizenship, an accomplishment that gives her great pride, but still does not eclipse her strong feeling of *Armenité*, or Armenian identity, a word that that requires her knowledge of French to keenly and clearly express.

CHAPTER SIX

ROOT

With the Russian language, I adopted world culture.

Root, aged 54-55 during this study, was born in Yerevan, Armenia, in 1957. Following

her trilingual childhood education in Armenian, Russian, and English, she studied at a university,

and this is when her two children were born. As an adult, Root was an archivist in an Armenian

museum before her immigration to the United States in 2003. Shortly after her arrival in

America, she began studying computers at Fernando College, where she earned an Associate of

Arts degree in Computer Applications and Office Technologies in 2008. She now lives with her

husband in the San Fernando Valley in California, downstairs from her daughter and two

grandsons, whose education she is actively involved in as their *tatik*, or grandma. Among the

participants, she was the third to immigrate to America, so her narrative appears here third; of all

of the participants' narratives, hers is the one which most directly and consistently focuses on her

languages and literacies. Though given the option to discuss connections between her languages

and her gender(ed) identity, she strongly preferred to focus on other points related to her

multilingualism, such as her philosophies about language learning and education; her narrative

thus relates her history while also spelling out some of the guiding principles that most influence

her thinking about her multilingual past, present, and future.

Before delving into Root's language and literacy history, an interlude on her pseudonym

is in order. Although other participants in the study created pseudonyms that were familiar to

them and based on Armenian names, Root's case was a bit different; instead, she chose an

English word that has, pun unavoidable, multiple deep meanings for her. She explained:

Root is the base of everything. It's the base of all languages, the part that can connect

many languages, the part that connects everything in life… How the plant is, it depends

on the root, right? And I think how human being is, it depends on his root… In the

ground, it's the environment, parents…everything which is his root. (Interview 1, July 2,

2012)

While a more involved discussion of some of the *situated meanings* (Gee, 2011) emerging from

the narrative chapters appears in Chapter Eight, Root's name alone is a word whose meanings

are sometimes invoked in her stories. Like the other participants, she told stories of her lifelong

relationships with her languages. However, with freedom to determine the course of the

interviews, many of Root's stories went narratively backward, into her family history, to include

stories of her ancestors as well as her children and grandchildren; and her forward narration often

involved philosophical ideas about how she envisions circumstances in the past and present

shaping the outcomes of future generations. In other words, in her telling of stories, she also

often talked about their roots, and how the stories became the roots both of later stories and of

her overall ideas about how the world works. These elements, then, deemed valuable and space-

worthy in Root's interweaving of them, comprise a portion of the history presented here.

Traveling Through the Past: From the Rainbow Come the Roots

Root's childhood was one surrounded by languages, most prominently including the

Armenian and Russian of her parents. She also recalled the Latin vocabulary of her parents, both

physicians; additionally present, though less prominently so, were the French and Persian

languages of her maternal grandmother, who settled in Armenia after having spent considerable

time in both Odessa and Tehran in her youth and adulthood, respectively. Although older

members of her family had also lived in Poland and Georgia, the Polish and Georgian languages

did not make it into to her household; still, describing her family's variegated cultural and linguistic roots, Root laughed and declared, "It was combined by many nations, many cultures," (Interview 2, July 9, 2012) and "It's a rainbow" (Interview 4, July 23, 2012). She continued:

> It's really as a rainbow, yeah. And what can I say? I really appreciate my grandparents, to be so different, because it helped over all of my life to better understand people, to better understand countries, and that was more interesting, you know. I never felt [myself] in the limited borders. (Interview 5, October 30, 2012)

Armenian and Russian: Two First Languages

Although Root's early experience with oral language included her grandmother's Persian, it is not a language that she acquired. In her home, it was sometimes used as a secret language, one that the younger children would not understand when conversations took place in it, but Root explained that without using the language, she "lost Persian" (Interview 6, November 27, 2012). For the most part, then, Root's earliest experiences with spoken language were bilingual. She explained that in her multi-generational household in Armenia, not everyone spoke Armenian, so both Russian and Armenian were the languages of her youth; "I started to hear, to learn, and to speak in both languages at the same time," she recalled (Interview 1, July 2, 2012). She went on:

> Two languages, as well as two cultures, were in my family, and I was in these two cultures from my birth, so there was not any difference between Armenian and Russian culture for me. These two languages were and are in one level because of my family. Half of my family, they knew Russian, and half knew Armenian and Russian. So I can't answer any question like, "Did I think in Russian in Armenian [one or the other]?" The answer is yes. It's mixed. (Interview 1, July 2, 2012)

While Armenian was one of her parents' household languages, her family also placed

great emphasis on acquiring literacy in Russian. Root remembers her home being filled with

books, about "80% Russian… and only 20% Armenian," (Interview 5, October 30, 2012), in part

because fewer books were printed in Armenian compared to what was available in Russian.

Russian literacy was also important because not all of her grandparents spoke Armenian, and

further because Russian was the language of the Soviet Empire as well as the language that

would be used for most of her classes in school. Even before learning to read Russian, she was

familiar with the physical attributes of books, as she recalled from one of her mother's stories:

> I don't remember, but my mom says that … in very early childhood, I asked to *read* [her
>
> emphasis] several times the same book, and then when somebody comes, when we have
>
> guests, I open this book, I read it and I change the pages [laughing and gesturing like
>
> flipping pages in the book] in the right places because I knew this … by heart. (Interview
>
> 1, July 2, 2012)

As she talked about acquiring Russian literacy, Root flashed forward to when she discovered the

work of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, whose work she would come to admire as an adolescent and

adult. She compared her very early exploration of the Russian alphabet with the deciphering

skills Sherlock Holmes exhibited in Doyle's story, "The Adventure of the Dancing Men"[14]:

> It's about a woman who got notes from her friend of her youth, with the symbols, and
>
> these symbols looked like a dancing man. And Sherlock Holmes, he figured out the
>
> letters, the whole message by comparing the symbols [to letters of the alphabet]… He
>
> thought the first group of letters should be her name, and then he looked for more. And

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[14] In this 1903 short story, Sherlock Holmes assists a woman who receives mysterious notes featuring only stick figures of dancing men. Holmes determines that each drawing represents a letter of the alphabet and then, using the woman's name as a key, deciphers the words in the cryptic messages.

when I read it, I started to laugh because I did the same thing in my childhood. I looked

to these symbols which were Russian letters and tried to understand. If it's this word

[gesturing like pointing on paper], and this letter is here, so this can be this letter. So

before I went to school, I knew my letters. (Interview 5, October 30, 2012)

With a home foundation — that is, solid roots — in these two languages, Root started her

formal schooling process at age six. Her school, though located in Armenia, was a Russian-

language school; she also studied Armenian language and literature from the first grade, but all

of the other classes were taught in Russian. It was, she said, like a Russian "magnet school"

(Interview 1, July 2, 2012). Root explained that the Russian-language schools at the time had a

more prestigious reputation than Armenian-language schools, but even in that setting, her

Armenian language studies were still of high quality. Of the memories Root has from these early

years of school, she described a few that were most notable for her: the ceremonious first and last

days of school, and the celebrations surrounding students' initial mastery of their alphabets.

Regarding the former, she recalled:

In Armenia, the first day of every school year …was a very special day. And particularly

for the first graders, it's an unbelievable ceremony, an unbelievable party! And…in May,

there is a ceremony [called] the last bell. Every time, two classes participate, the first

graders and the graduating students. And it's an amazing party. (Interview 5, October 30,

2012)

For Root, the first-grade ritual of learning the alphabet was twofold, since she studied

both Armenian and Russian in a classroom setting at that age. After learning how to write the

alphabet in both print and cursive, children composed a book of the letters, in Armenian

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transliterated as *aibenaran*, and in Russian *azbuka*, what might be called in English an alphabet book. She described the ceremony that came after the completion of the alphabet books:

> In our schools, we have a party, an alphabet party. When we were done with the alphabet, we have to make a performance and everybody carried a letter and wore it [during] this performance. It was very important, and it was in the memories of all the schoolchildren for their entire life, and they gave you … like a diploma [to show] that you are done with the alphabet. (Interview 2, July 9, 2012)

Learning both alphabets was an accomplishment to be proud of, but Root's memory of the Armenian *aibenaran* ceremony was especially potent; it was through this ritual, she said, that she first felt a connection to her Armenian roots.

> This was a tradition. And you are very proud that you are a part of this nation that has this alphabet, and all the children in the first grade, they knew the history, how our alphabet was created… It's the first time you realize that you are part of this nation, that you are Armenian and this is your language. This is your history. And I think all the schools, they have a trip to the church where the alphabet creator, Mesrop Mashtots [is buried]… The child at that moment, he figures out who he is, and what his roots are. (Interview 2, July 9, 2012)

Fourth Grade, Third Language

After starting her education bilingually, Root began classroom study of her third language, English, in the fourth grade. Not unlike her pre-school experiences in her other languages, her exposure to English began before her first formal English classes did. She explained:

My uncle, he was like my brother because there were only three years difference between us, and we were in the same school. So… I learned English from him, and when he was doing his homework, I was always with him. So I knew some stuff in the beginning, and I was very excited because any question the teacher tried to explain to us, and then she asked a question, and I raised my hand [gestures to raise her hand and laughs]… I was prepared for this. (Interview 4, July 23, 2012)

Her English studies in Armenia continued until the year she graduated from high school, and that year was memorable for another reason, which became the root of one of her most cherished memories of studying English as a young woman: *Jesus Christ Superstar*. During a language lab session normally reserved for listening to English on cassette tapes, a fellow student brought in a copy of this new "pop opera" (Interview 4, July 23, 2012). That day, the class asked the teacher if they could listen to the tape instead of their usual aural lessons in "linguistic rules", and

…of course she agreed! I remember that — during this class, I don't know for what reason, but our principal, he went to this cabinet… and there was a silence, but he noticed that we were not writing but we were all moving [she gestures like holding headphones on her ears and dancing her seat]. That was our first meeting with such kind of music, but our teacher, she said that it's okay because we are listening to the real English language, and we are trying to understand it… And that was new, that was not academic, but our teachers, they accepted it and they not only allowed us to hear this pop opera during our English classes, but they wanted us to know about this, to have our ideas…about this opera, this pop opera, in the Soviet Union. (Interview 5, October 30, 2012)

Root remembers her other language learning activities as engaging, if not quite as entertaining as the ones with *Jesus Christ Superstar*. The activities in all three languages

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involved a great deal of copying sentences, passages, and poems correctly into "eight or ten notebooks" (Interview 3, July 18, 2012) throughout the year, sometimes accompanied by short memorized presentations of the same passages and poems. Lessons in all three languages also strongly emphasized correctness in the written form, as these classes were "for language, for writing, not speaking" (Interview 4, July 23, 2012). Focused on mastery of formal features of the language, writing assignments involved dictation and many word- and sentence-level grammar and vocabulary exercises. "I knew how to write, how to read, and how to learn with dictionaries. That is why my written English is better than spoken English… that was the main way of teaching in Soviet schools" (Interview 1, July 2, 2012). Outside of the language-specific classes, her knowledge of other subjects was also evaluated based on how she expressed that knowledge through language, specifically through writing assignments like detailed summaries, analyses, and creative interpretations of famous authors, characters, and historical figures, as well as both planned and spontaneous oral presentations.

Soviet Education and *The Reading Age*

In narrating these stories of her early school years, Root's retellings also regularly reference the high quality of education she received in the Soviet system, and how the lifelong love of learning and deep knowledge of world history and cultures that had its roots in that education have helped shape the woman she is today. Some of the highlights of her Soviet education included an emphasis on oral presentations, something that is absent, she says, from the American system of education, with its emphasis on writing at the expense of oral skills; part of this oral focus also involved an insistence on using academic language and overall formality in the school setting, which she further associated with the serious Soviet approach to education. These elements, combined with the stress placed on written accuracy, instilled "muscle memory"

(Interview 2, July 9, 2012) in Root, which she was able to use in her later studies in the United States and which she still is able to access today. With some exposure to the American system of education via her grandchildren, she also clearly asserted that "the base that the teachers in Armenia put in each student is much better than here" (Interview 2, July 9, 2012).

Of additional significance to Root in delineating the high quality of Soviet education was the adherence to a standardized curriculum. She said, "[I]n the Soviet Union, all the school, they have the same program… for everybody. All the teachers, they explained the same thing. Maybe one teacher is better than another teacher" (Interview 3, July 18, 2012), but the expectation that everyone in the same grade would be taught the same material, even with some variation in teaching styles, was an important and positive characteristic of her education. Likewise, since everything was meant to be equal under the socialist system, this meant that, in line with the standardized curriculum, there were no levels or tracks, such as remedial or advanced, in the Soviet schools. This absence is one area that Root identified as a disadvantage in the Soviet system, especially since she has now been able to compare her experience to what her youngest child and both grandchildren have gone through in California public school settings. Still, despite the Soviet insistence on equality, Root described her experience in high school as similar to going through an advanced track of classes. She explained that "sometimes there were classes inside the school where most of the students were [at] a very high level, which happened with our class" (Interview 1, July 2, 2012). Seeing the potential in their high-level students, Root's teachers followed the prescribed sequence of lessons but regularly went beyond it by adding more material to it, usually in the form of additional coverage of world literature and history. Because her teachers pushed her beyond the limits of the standardized curriculum, she reflected, "I'm very grateful for my teachers because they not only gave us the knowledge, they gave us

the opportunity to be very educated people and to love the education for our entire life"

(Interview 4, July 23, 2012). In this way, those teachers served as the root of their students'

lifelong relationship with education and learning.

All in all, the most prominent advantage that Root identified from her Soviet education

was its focus, both inside and outside of the classroom, on extensive reading, through which

students learned about world cultures and values. She lived, she said, in "The Reading Age"

(Interview 3, July 18, 2012). In this way, life inside the Iron Curtain was not insular; rather, it

was in some ways far more culturally open and advanced than what Root has seen, primarily

through her grandchildren, in today's American generation, and the root of this was the Russian

language. In her school and home life, "knowledge of the Russian [language] allowed us to have

a wide opportunity to catch the cultural values from all of the world" (Interview 1, July 2, 2012).

"With the Russian language, I adopted world culture," she said (Interview 1, July 2, 2012).

Root in Adulthood: University, a Bilingual Career, and Motherhood

After graduating from high school, Root went to an Armenian university, where she

majored in Oriental Studies, specifically focusing on the languages, cultures, and history of the

Middle East. Her stories from this period in her education were not as detailed as those from her

elementary and secondary school years, but she still had some experiences that stood out, either

in contrast to her earlier school years or in contrast to her experiences with and perceptions of

postsecondary education in America. For example, whereas her earlier school years were

characterized by a lot of copying and memorizing, university work further required skills like

taking notes during lectures. The Soviet system also lacked the element of choice, such that

students took the classes they were told to, when they were told to, without the array of choices

that is typical in the American setting. Moreover, as opposed to having a sustained period of

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focus on a major as is common for university degrees in America, Root's Soviet university experience placed more emphasis on a broad understanding of her general education classes; that is, her university studies valued breadth over depth. Although this provided a strong background in those areas of general education, she said that "[t]he major subjects … were not learned as deeply as they should be. That was the bad part" (Interview 3, July 18, 2012). Rather than seeing the university as a place to learn a major, Root saw it as a place to acquire "the base to be very educational people. But to be an expert in your major, in your profession, you had to do it by yourself" (Interview 4, July 23, 2012).

After she started at the university, she got married in 1979 and became pregnant with her first child before completing her degree. With the idea that one's root of knowledge is established in the university and developed later in a profession, Root decided to forego her degree to begin raising her children and enter the working world; "I stopped my education, but I still continued it by myself," she explained (Interview 3, July 18, 2012). In 1986, at the age of 29, she began working in a noted Armenian museum as an archivist, a job she held until her immigration to the United States in 2003. While her university coursework and overall intellect were very useful in this position, her advanced knowledge of the Russian language also played a role in advancing her career, which involved preparing museum materials not only in Armenian, but also in Russian for traveling exhibits.

> And because I knew Russian, not on [just] the spoken level, the manager gave me special tasks when they planned outside exhibitions. So I translated. She gave me the exhibition plan in Armenian, and… I translated all of the things into Russian. (Interview 4, July 23, 2012)

Russian was the shared language throughout the Soviet Union, but not everyone in Armenia had as strong a base in the written language as she did, and this is something that was — and still is — a source of great pride for her. Her work responsibilities in Russian as well as her ability to travel in Russia without an Armenian accent were assets that differentiated her from some of her fellow Armenians, such that in Russia, she said, "There were no feelings that I was a foreign woman in this society" (Interview 2, July 9, 2012).

At the same time as she was working in the museum, Root maintained another, even more important job in her home: raising her two children. Her descriptions of their youngest years related regularly to the importance of literacy, multilingualism, and education that were established in their family home, the roots of which were of course prevalent in her childhood as well. Although the Soviet Union was not as forceful a presence when her children were born in 1980 and 1989, she still wanted them to be raised with the richness of the Russian language, as she was; thus, before starting school, they spoke both Armenian and Russian, and they had also already started learning the English alphabet. Whereas Root's elementary and secondary education was in the Russian school, her children attended the English language magnet. As such, their third language was introduced in first grade, so beginning with their earliest school experiences, her children were trilingual. This meant that by around 2000, the family as a whole was relatively proficient in English, and that helped ease the transition they all made when they immigrated to the United States in 2003.

Traveling to the Present: From the Reading Age to the Technology Age

At the age of 46, anticipating more available opportunities for their children's futures than what was available in Armenia, Root and her husband decided to move the family to the United States. Her daughter had already graduated from high school and would be able to pursue

a university degree, and her son, then in ninth grade, would be able to acquire some experience in the American education system before his university studies began. Although Root's husband, with an advanced degree in physics, could work as a tutor in science and math while seeking adjunct faculty opportunities at local institutions, Root's skills in the Armenian and Russian languages, coupled with her museum experience, did not immediately translate into a potential career for her in the United States. Sensing that American jobs would likely be rooted in at least two basic proficiencies, English and computers, she started to refashion herself for this new context by enrolling in some classes at a local vocational school. Having already studied English in her youth, she was fluent enough to test out of the English as a Second Language courses there and took a few classes in basic computer literacy.

Shortly thereafter, in 2005, Root started working toward refreshing her academic English and advancing her computer skills by enrolling at Fernando College. She recalled, "I took a placement exam and they allowed me to start from ENL [English as a Native Language], not ESL, so my knowledge from my country was very good" (Interview 1, July 2, 2012). To prepare for Freshman Composition, she took a three-course series of pre-collegiate level English classes, in which she was consistently successful; a highlight came in the semester before she took English 101, when she won a college-wide award for an autobiographical essay about the connections between her Armenian identity and the apricot, long identified as a symbol of Armenian culture. As she described these early experiences with refreshing her English in the college setting, she expressed pride in her accomplishments, including the fact that among the other, mostly American-born students, her scores on grammar tests were often the highest. Though she was lauded for her composition skills, they did not come without effort, but her

extensive involvement with literacy in her other languages was something that she said helped her to adjust smoothly to writing in English.

> The more difficult part of English is to write essays. But if you were good in Armenian or Russian essays, even though the structure is not the same, the main points are not the same, if you were good in your languages' essays, to change to the American standards is not so hard, not so painful. (Interview 5, October 30, 2012)

While Root was pursuing her Associate of Arts degree in Computer Applications and Office Technologies, she took two semesters of yet another language, Spanish, to fulfill part of her general education requirements. Though this is not a language she has maintained outside the classroom, describing her time in these classes led her to elaborate on some of her overarching ideas about language learning and multilingualism. For example, she explained that since her Spanish studies did not lead to extensive reading or communication in the language, she did not really *learn* it; thus, for Root, to study only the grammar or formal characteristics of a language without using it for conversation or reading does not really qualify as true language learning. That said, studying the grammar and syntax of a language is the root of understanding that language as a system, and knowing something about one language with a lot of grammar rules, like Armenian, can be helpful when striving to acquire another rule-heavy language like Spanish, even if the rules of those two languages differ significantly. Understanding metalinguistic features of different languages and being able to take "a little bit from this language, a little bit from another language" (Interview 5, October 30, 2012) were also important strategies for studying her new language. Her reflections on studying Spanish even touched upon one of the more hot-button topics in contemporary Applied Linguistics, the so-called native speaker myth (Canagarajah, 1999), i.e. the belief that a so-called *native speaker* of a language is inherently

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better equipped to teach that language than someone who learned it as an adult or otherwise speaks it as a second or subsequent language. Her second-semester Spanish teacher was from India and had a PhD in Spanish, which was not his first language; this contrasted with her first-semester teacher, who had only a Master's degree but was a native speaker from Mexico. She remarked:

> If you are a native speaker, it doesn't mean that you learned this language deeply. If you [are] not [a native speaker], you have to go deeply to learn this language. And my Spanish 2 teacher, he was from India, and he knew not only grammar, but everything else about the language, much more than the first teacher. (Interview 5, October 30, 2012)

Throughout her time at Fernando, with the exception of her two semesters of Spanish, Root was immersed in English through both her courses and the jobs she had as a student assistant in various departments on campus. Her work in one of the major campus computer labs, combined with her duties as a teaching assistant for numerous computer literacy courses and her work as a computer tutor in Fernando's Learning Center, required fluent conversational English with students of diverse language backgrounds. After having used her English in the college setting more for reading and writing than for speaking and listening, she said that working in the computer lab facilitated her first experiences with sustained oral communication in English; it "opened the world of spoken English for me" (Interview 1, July 2, 2012). Additionally, although she was still able and happy to speak Armenian and Russian to help other students who preferred to use those languages over English, her time at Fernando was characterized by English, the language she used to take notes, write papers, and speak; over time, she realized that she "even was thinking in English" (Interview 6, November 27, 2012). If only in that specific context and for that relatively short amount of time, English was Root's primary language.

A Multilingual *Tatik*, or Grandma

Root graduated from Fernando College with her A.A. degree in 2010. Because her jobs there were dependent on her student status, her work in the computer lab and computer classes ended at the same time as her coursework.[15] By that time, her son had completed his undergraduate education at a prestigious American university, and her daughter was nearing completion of her M.A. in English Composition. Her relationship with her children has always been positive, and she reflected:

> I'm very happy because there were never any misunderstandings between parents and children in my family. And even now, when my children, they now are higher than I am, even now, they share everything with me. They are very attentive to my suggestions, to my thoughts. (Interview 6, November 27, 2012)

Though her son is now pursuing his graduate degree in another state, Root's daughter, son-in-law, and two grandsons have lived downstairs from her since 2008. Root, pleased with their proximity to her, has gladly taken an active role in helping care for her grandsons, something she has been doing all their lives but especially since her daughter completed her graduate studies and began working as an adjunct English instructor at Fernando College. As their *tatik* [*little grandma*, Armenian transliteration], Root has been able to share not only her knowledge of multiple languages but also her experience with multiple education systems as she has helped guide her grandsons through their elementary school years. Her home features a room devoted to the print materials that surrounded her as a child, "a study room with books on all the walls" (Interview 1, July 2, 2012). She plays word games with them that feature both English

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[15] Root was a student worker at Fernando College while she took classes there; however, for a brief period during the Spring 2013 semester — after this study's main data collection period, but before the write-up and analysis were complete — Root returned to work at the Learning Center in a temporary full-time computer lab assistant position.

and Armenian terms, and she also uses both languages to help them with their homework. She said, for example, when discussing math problems, "The rules, the explanations are in English. But the corrections, interactions, in Armenian" (Interview 5, October 30, 2012). And it is not just the grandsons who learn in these encounters; Root is also enjoying the reciprocity of learning with them, since every year, "from the end of August, again I am school girl!" (Interview 5, October 30, 2012). She continued:

> You know, I learned a lot during my life. But not everything. And there are — there are, and there will be always holes which I want to fill. For example, my fifth grader grandson, now he's taking social studies. It's history, but mostly history of United States. I know the world history, and course the history of Armenia and Russia and Soviet Union, but not so detailed about America. (Interview 5, October 30, 2012)

Besides her bilingual school-focused interactions with her grandsons, Root maintains all three of her languages with regular social contact and other, often literacy-centric activities. "I have Russian speaker friends, I have Armenian speaker friends, I have English speaker friends," she said (Interview 1, July 2, 2012). She gets her news from print and online sources in both English and Russian, and she also enjoys watching movies in English, though television dialogue is sometimes incomprehensibly rapid. She noted that she has seen "some movies here in the original which I saw translated in Armenian and in Russian in my country. And I found new things. It's very interesting" (Interview 6, November 27, 2012). In addition to English movies, she likes watching movies and other shows on Armenian language channels, and through that medium she has even been able to watch some older Armenian-language films and programs that were not available when she lived in the Soviet Union because of stringent media restrictions. She is also happy that, through television, the younger generation of Armenian-Americans has

access to Armenian programs, so that they remain in touch with their history and home culture — in essence, with their roots —as those are understood and expressed by other Armenians.

In terms of her daily language use, she usually speaks Armenian with her husband and her daughter, the English teacher, but phone conversations with her son are usually in English. Root also explained that with her son's native-like proficiency, "he says that when I talk in English, I have a Russian accent. And he tries to show my mistakes… and always he wants me to repeat but with more correct pronunciation" (Interview 2, July 9, 2012). Still, despite awareness of an accent, she said that in settings where English is used predominantly over her other languages, she has noticed that "my conversation is only English in my mind. And then I realized that now, really, I'm an English speaker. It's my language" (Interview 3, July 18 2012). One of those settings is her multicultural, multilingual apartment building. She can use English with some tenants, but she is happy to have occasions to use her Armenian and Russian there as well. Her building is a microcosm for what happens in larger multilingual settings where people can communicate with each other easily using their shared language knowledge, especially when they share knowledge of more than one language. She explained, "The knowledge of cultures, the knowledge [of] the whole system, it changes …you from inside, and you become more understandable to everybody, to every nationality, and there is no borders like walls between different people from different nationalities" (Interview 1, July 2, 2012).

The Technology Age: Rewarding, but Bittersweet

In reflecting on her life in the United States, Root depicted this period of time as the "Technology Age" (Interview 3, July 18, 2012), and though she used this moniker to differentiate it from her youth, the Reading Age, much of the technology that surrounds her today still involves literacy-focused activities. The Internet, with its multilingual news sources,

has a daily role in Root's life; she also talks regularly to her relatives in Armenia via Skype, and she has used the web to find Russian-language material for her son to access easily. "Once, he came for his vacation, and he said, 'I want to restore my Russian,' so I found some poems and some stories from the Internet," she recalled (Interview 1, July 2, 2012). She is a self-professed fan of text messages, and though she only writes them with the Latin alphabet, they are often in a combination of her three main languages, with some occasional Persian or Spanish words in the mix as well. She uses the computer for other tasks, too, like paying household bills and enhancing PowerPoint presentations for her daughter's and grandsons' classes. By far, though, Root's favorite technological device is her Kindle, a gift from her son which she uses every day. Through this technology, she has not only revisited the work of her favorite English-language author, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle; the Kindle has further allowed her to quickly and conveniently update her Russian-language library. She related a recent conversation she had with her son about this technological innovation:

> When I was talking with [him], I said that I downloaded like fifteen books to my Kindle, and he asked me, "All of them are Russian?" I said, "Yes, of course!" He said, "Why? Why not English?" And I said that maybe I was eager to read Russian after like ten years. That's why now I want to read in this language. Sometimes the books are not very high level books, but that's okay. I'm just reading… I never have the problem to choose the book. I like reading. I like to read, and in every book I can find something interesting for me… And everywhere I go, the Kindle is in my bag. (Interview 2, July 9, 2012)

Having arrived in the United States without knowing how to use a computer mouse, Root is happy to have not only picked up this new technology for herself, but to have majored in it for her A.A. degree.

When I came here, I realized that I couldn't do any step without … the new technology knowledge. That's why I… started to climb the new mountain. And to achieve the new tops of the mountains and took computer classes, and made it as my main major here, since you can't do anything without the new technologies. (Interview 2, July 9, 2012)

Still, despite the pride she feels in this accomplishment, Root expressed some hesitant regret during our conversations about not taking more advantage of her multilingualism in continuing her education or trying to carve out more of a career here. That her languages and talents did not lead to a permanent full-time job in America was also a disappointment. "I'm very sad that this society, this country, they didn't accept me, my knowledge… they didn't want to use my knowledge" (Interview 6, November 27, 2012). When I asked if she thought that being multilingual gave her a sense of financial as well as intellectual wealth, she said, "It should, but it didn't… Every time, knowledge should give you benefits, not only spiritual" (Interview 3, July 18, 2012). She wondered aloud about how her path might have been different here if she had chosen languages, rather than computers, as her degree specialty; however, a new career did not end up being part of her life in America, and though at times bittersweet, she is still generally content with her life now. "55 is time… it's retirement time," she said, a time when she can devote her hours to her grandchildren, other family members, and her beloved Kindle, and in the end, she declared, "that's really okay" (Interview 2, July 9, 2012).

Traveling Into the Future: Foregoing Plans for Guiding Principles

Like Mazar, who is closest to her in age, Root rarely mentioned her future plans. This absence, though noticeable, more likely speaks to her affable acceptance of her life as it is now than to any lingering sense of regret about her education or career choices in America. Having had a career in Armenia, having raised two children, and participating now in raising her

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grandsons, there is little left on her to-do list for her to feel that she has led a satisfying life. She made brief mention of someday revisiting her Persian language roots through informal study, since, as she said, "I lost just the formal part of the language, which… if I want, I can get back" (Interview 6, November 27, 2012). Additionally, as she was reminded during this research about times in her youth when she would write stories, she said that "maybe — maybe, after like five, six years, I'll start to write some stories. Maybe. Maybe" (Interview 2, July 9, 2012).

More than plans for her future, however specific or fuzzy, Root talked a lot about how she sees the world now, and how both her and others' actions can have a positive influence on the future of our world. Throughout our interviews, Root was very focused on the overall goals for the study as outlined in the Informed Consent Form, and she was enthusiastic about sharing her views on languages, literacies, and the research process itself. It was especially interesting to see connections between the philosophies Root articulated and some of the philosophies and theoretical constructs that are now prevalent in TESOL and Applied Linguistics; her ideas expressed above about dispelling the "native speaker myth" (Canagarajah, 1999) is one such comparison that comes to mind. There were many others, too many to fully elaborate on for a dissertation not reserved only for her narrative, but one of her ideas was particularly poignant in the context of this study's feminist-ethical framework and narrative methodology.

At the beginning of Interview 5, previewing the immediate future of that conversation as well as what could come thereafter in our final interview and subsequent follow-up discussions, I told Root that I might, at that stage in the process, ask some of the same or similar questions, primarily to ensure that I had a clear understanding of what she had already said. Her response encapsulated one of the most compelling reasons for doing narrative work in the first place: that narrative has the ability to help us see events in our lives from a different time perspective, and

to take those events and that perspective in combination to try to make sense of our present lived

experiences and approaches toward the future. In her words:

> In Russian, there is a very, very wise sentence. It's in Russian, and it is about re-
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> evaluating values. I remember in school, I talked about my literature and language
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> teacher who was a great teacher. And every time she said, please, read the books after
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> one, two years, and after… five or ten years again. And you will see very — a lot of new
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> things that you never saw, for example, last time. (Interview 5, October 30, 2012).

In other words, not only was it okay for me to ask the same thing again; it was useful and

important to us both, since the influences of time and experience might have an effect on the

answer to that question when asked the second time. When we met for our sixth and final full

interview, I asked her if she had any more thoughts on the value of re-seeing things after a period

of time, and how that re-seeing might affect perceptions of past events, present routines, and

future plans. She said, "When you re-evaluate everything, you can do your next step. Otherwise,

you're guessing" (Interview 6, November 27, 2012). So without a lot of specific details about

future aspirations, we at least know about Root's approach to thinking about the future, which

involves re-evaluating things in the past and present to help her make sense of the world and

guide her next steps. It is hard to imagine a more fitting match between a narrative study and a

research participant whose perspective on the value of telling her story so closely mirrors what

scholars have said about the power of narrative.

Interpreting Root's Journey: Language, Culture, and Gender

Root's language and literacy history sheds light on some of her deeply held beliefs about

the nature of multilingualism, and even about the terminology that we use to talk about knowing

and using multiple languages. Her notion of having two first languages, having been raised in

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and around both Armenian and Russian equally in her home and then later in school, is one that sparks questions about what it means to speak a *first* language, and what to name this situation with two *firsts*. Even the notion of *primary* language might not be adequate here, considering that after she became comfortable as a student and student worker at Fernando College, the context helped determined her primary language, which became English, if only under those specific circumstances.

In addition to her ideas about the roles of native and non-native speakers as language teachers (related to Canagarajah, 1999), Root's narrative also addresses ways that her languages affected the power she was able to assert in different situations. While traveling in Russia, she was perceived as a native speaker, not as a "foreign woman" (Interview 2, July 9, 2012), and so her Russian was a source of social capital. Similarly, in Armenia, as a museum archivist, her ability to maneuver effortlessly in both Armenian and Russian was a solid source of linguistic as well as economic capital (Bourdieu, 1991; Flowerdew & Miller, 2008), whereas her command of three languages did not function as that type of capital in America. As she succinctly stated, "it should [have], but it didn't" (Interview 3, July 18, 2012). In sum, her new American context greatly devalued her cultural/linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1991; Messekher, 2011).

Root's interest in this study's focus and research questions was a boon for deep discussions about the role of literacy in knowing a language. Throughout our interviews, Root distinguished strongly between *studying* a language and *knowing* it; to her, true knowledge of a language is simply not possible without the ability to navigate the print world of that language by reading and writing. Also required to know a language is an accompanying awareness of cultural aspects associated with that language, aspects best discoverable by reading in that language. The spoken language, the written language, and the culture(s) of a particular language are all

interconnecting parts of that language as a *system*; to know the language, then, is to know the intricate details of this system.

Besides offering insights into her life in multiple languages, Root's narrative also delves deeply into her ideas about how language and culture are linked, how language and language knowledge are associated with national identity, and how knowledge of multiple languages makes a person "more open" and "not in limited borders" (Interview 5, October 30, 2012). Also of note and worthy of more complex exploration is Root's notion of language as something that can either remove borders, in the case of her apartment building, or can create them, in the case of her grandparents' using Persian as a secret language. Root's use of English in Fernando College, her apartment building, and other multilingual contexts in America also calls to mind the literature on English as a Lingua Franca (e.g., Jenkins, 2006; Seidlhofer, 2009), and it sparks interesting comparisons to situations in which both Root and the other participants lived in the Soviet Union with Russian, rather than English, as the Lingua Franca.

Root's reflections on the research process and how our interview meetings allowed her to re-see and re-evaluate events from her distant and recent past were informative not only for their insights into her language and literacy history but also for her ideas about the value of narrative overall. Additionally, as a grandmother, she is re-learning about the world by reading a range of school materials with her grandsons, so she is able to re-examine her roots through her own older eyes; beyond that type of re-seeing, she can also try to re-see historical events that she lived through in the Soviet Union as they are elucidated in her grandsons' textbooks and as they are understood by a younger generation of Armenian-Americans. As the grandkids study this history in a family socialized into literacy and guided by their *tatik*, they learn about their own roots, a concept dear enough to Root to become her pseudonym.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

ANNA

After USA, maybe I'm gonna go to the end of the world! I'm not sure this is the last place.

Anna, aged 34-35 during this study, was born in Artsvashen, Armenia, in 1978. When

she was five years old, her family moved to Krasnoyselsk, Armenia,[16] where she began her

formal education. After graduating in 1995, Anna moved to Kirov, Russia, to flee the spiraling

Armenian economy and the strained political situation with neighboring Azerbaijan. While in

Kirov, she studied law at a Russian-language university, met and married her husband, and had

her two children. Offered the opportunity to acquire a green card via her in-laws, she moved with

her husband and daughters to the United States in 2007; shortly thereafter, in the Spring of 2009,

she started learning English and taking other general education courses at Fernando College.

Among the participants, Anna was the last to immigrate to America, so her narrative appears

here last; of all of the participants' narratives, Anna's is the most traditional with regard to the

role she holds as the woman of her Armenian household, though it also reflects the strengthened

sense of agency she has come to feel as a result of learning English. Her story is also the most

uncertain with regard to her future, evoking possibilities for even more languages and border-

crossings than what she has experienced in her life thus far.

Traveling Through the Past: Multilingual Migrations

Anna was born in the village of Artsvashen, a relatively small Armenian exclave

surrounded entirely by Azerbaijan (see Figure 6). Although she was born during the Soviet

period, her parents did not speak Russian, so her sole home language was Armenian. Because of

the geographic proximity to Azerbaijan, her grandparents spoke both Armenian and Azerbaijani,

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[16] Krasnoyselsk was renamed *Chambarak* after Armenian independence in 1991. Since Anna
referred to the town exclusively as *Krasnoyselsk*, that is the name used throughout her narrative.

Figure 6. Screen shot of Artsvashen, Armenia. Artsvashen, Anna's birthplace, is marked "A" in the above figure. This Armenian village is entirely surrounded by the country of Azerbaijan, and the two countries have had sustained conflict over the territorial rights to Artsvashen since approximately 1991. Image credit: Google Maps, retrieved July 27, 2013.

as did her father; this was not a language that played a significant role in her home, but she has

faint memories of it from some of her childhood interactions:

> When I was small, I remember we went to [buy] watermelons or something. They
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> brought from Azerbaijan villages to Artsvashen and they sold them. And people are very
>
> friendly with each other, Azerbaijan people and Armenian people, but now, you know,
>
> they are enemy. (Interview 1, July 6, 2012)

Anna characterized Artsvashen as a "farming village, with "cows, chickens, everything"

(Interview 6, August 17, 2012), and though it seemed large through her childhood eyes, she

realized in her retelling that it was in fact "so small between all the Azerbaijan villages"

(Interview 1, July 6, 2012).

In 1985, she moved with her parents and brother to Krasnoyselsk, an Armenian town on

the Azerbaijani border (see Figure 7), when her mother got a job as a teacher there. As a young

child, though, she continued to spend time in Artsvashen during summer visits to her

grandparents' homes. She recalled that life in Artsvashen was busy with farming-related labor,

and that literacy and reading were not activities she associated with her time there.

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Figure 7. Screen shot of Krasnoyselsk (formerly Chambarak), Armenia. This is where Anna's family moved when she was five. The enclosed area to the east of Arabachi is Artsvashen, Armenia, Anna's birthplace. Image credit: Google Maps, retrieved July 27, 2013.

In our village, when I grew up, the people were very busy. Actually they didn't have time to read. They were busy, they have some animals, they have to take care of them. And in the evening, they were so tired that they just sleep. But my grandfather, he again didn't have any time but when he had time… he told us stories from books [as opposed to reading directly from them]. My grandmother, no. My grandmother, she was always busy. Maybe she didn't even know the letters very well. But I was very happy when my grandfather, he told me some stories about his life before. Yeah, it was so interesting and we…were sitting with my brother, he was talking, that was very nice. And every evening, we said, "Grandfather and grandma, please tell us something again!" (Interview 2, July 13, 2012)

To Krasnoyselsk: A New Home, Two New Alphabets

When Anna's family moved to Krasnoyselsk, the focus moved from farming in Artsvashen to her mother's career as a toddler teacher; accompanying this change was a shift from the oral storytelling of her grandfather to the literacy-focused activities of her mother.

Though she did not recall learning the alphabet prior to her first grade lessons, she remembers her mother as a regular reader.

> My mom, she likes books! When she [would] read, I said, "Mom! It's boring! You're always reading!" And she said, "It's not boring when you read them," so then that book, for us it was interesting….My dad, he doesn't like to read a lot, but my mom, yes. (Interview 2, July 13, 2012)

After about two years in Krasnoyselsk, Anna began first grade at the customary age of seven, and, like Root, her most vivid memories of that year included her very first day of school and, later, the traditional *aibenaran*[17] ceremony to commemorate learning the alphabet. Regarding the latter, she explained, "It means that you already finished the letters, you know how to read, and they do a big party" (Interview 2, July 13, 2012). With a wide and excited smile, Anna further described her favorite details from her first school day, such as donning her school uniform, taking flowers to the teacher, and introducing herself to the other students in the class.

> I always remember that day when little girl, I have long hair… Big buns on my head, tiny little girl… I have a not color picture, it's white and black, yeah. And I was so excited. We wore uniform, a black or brown dress, like this [gestures that her uniform had puffy sleeves], red [kerchief]. And especially it's important, first day, the first of September, we go to school with big flowers…for the teacher. I'm a little tiny girl, big buns on my head, big flowers, like that! But when my mom left, I started to cry, and I don't remember …only me or somebody else cried. But my teacher, she said, "Don't cry! Just learn! This

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[17] Anna pronounces this with an additional syllable, a schwa between with the two [b] sounds: [aibəbɛnaran].

is school, your mom is gonna be with you later, you have to learn everything." And then I never cry. I just explain ourselves for the class… introduce ourselves. My name is kind of different, [states her real name]. In Armenia or Russia, it's like only two or three girls with this name. I always say, "My god! No one is gonna say my name, everybody gonna laugh!" But no, everybody liked my name… And then it was very very good, very fantastic, my first day of school. I always like school. (Interview 6, August 17, 2012)

As Anna described the first few lessons from that first year of school, she, like Lilit and Mazar, addressed how important it was for schoolchildren to learn to write neatly; during one of our meetings, she further illustrated on paper the ritual of hand-drawing the margins in her notebooks, which did not have them pre-printed on the pages.

In the second grade, Anna began the study of her second language, Russian, which also featured a ceremony, the *azbuka*, to celebrate the learning the alphabet. Despite the fact that it was not a common household language, Anna understood from an early age that it was an important part of school under the Soviet Union. She said, "If you live in Soviet Union… all the people have to know Russian because Russian is the common language and the national language. You don't have a choice. No choice. You have to know Russian" (Interview 6, August 17, 2012). So she learned Russian in the classroom setting from second grade through graduation, and while Armenian was still the language of her home and her primary reading language, her second language studies would later come to serve her well when she moved to Russia at the age of 17.

Like most other children her age in the Soviet Union, Anna's third language studies began in the fourth grade, when she started taking German classes. Her third language was dictated by the school she lived closest to, and since she lived near the school that taught

German, that is what she studied; had she lived elsewhere, her third language might have been French or English. Anna has only vague memories of learning classroom German, centered mainly on how strict the teacher was[18] and on her grades overall being lower in German than in her other classes; she recalled, "Everything was A, but my German was B" (Interview 5, August 7, 2012). Though this is not a language Anna has retained — "I forgot absolutely everything because I didn't use that language," she said (Interview 6, August 17, 2012) — she does acknowledge that learning German was ultimately useful for her, since it allowed her to more easily learn to read in English, having already studied the Latin alphabet.

Beyond the celebration of writing in her *aibenaran* and *azbuka* ceremonies, Anna's years in school also regularly emphasized the formal, standard features of writing; for example, in one of her German classes, she recalls, "We memorized and you have to write everything, exactly how the poem is, capitalized, the commas, everything. And write down, write again, and the teacher will grade us for this" (Interview 3, July 20, 2012). Rather than feeling oppressed by having to follow these rules, Anna embraced them and felt pride when she was able to adhere to her teachers' strict writing guidelines. From about the age of ten until she graduated, she even dabbled in composing poems in Armenian; the content was not only in Armenian, but about Armenian, and about her love of her language and nation.

> I wrote about my Armenian language, what it means to me. We learned about other
> poems like this, so I wrote something like, "My lovely Armenian language, you teach us
> so much!" I also wrote about my country, my Armenia, my Ararat. At that time in school,
> [they] teach that you have to love your country. I had a friend who always laughed at me

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[18] It was customary for students to have only one teacher throughout their years of study, rather than one teacher for each school year. Anna had only one German teacher throughout her seven years of studying German.

[imitates her laughter], and one day I said, "Next time I'm not gonna show you my poetry! Go away!" (Interview 2, July 13, 2012)

In addition to describing details of her experiences inside the classroom, Anna spoke quite wistfully of her life outside of school, and how it was so different from what her children are experiencing now as they grow up in America.

I'm very happy that I saw those times. My poor kids, all the kids, they won't see how people lived [at] that time. Only white and black TV, No Internet, IPod, phone. Our childhood was very simple… we played outside. Before it was very interesting, very simple, very clear… I remember and I…wish those times will come back. People are gonna think when I talk to them that I'm like 80 years old! They say, "You are like grandma!" (Interview 6, August 17, 2012)

Against the backdrop of these nostalgic recollections, though, was the political reality surrounding Anna's school years. In 1993, when Anna was in the eighth grade, Armenia's economy was in a downturn; the 1991 declaration of independence from the Soviet Union had brought personal liberties but also the financial woes of establishing a new state economy. The year 1993 also saw the continued conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the territory of Nagorno-Karabagh, and although Anna lived hours away from the site of that conflict, she was a mere seven miles from the Azerbaijani border. Nevertheless, amidst this chaos, Anna was doing well in school, and when her parents decided to move away, Anna was granted permission to stay with her grandparents, who relocated to Krasnoyselsk so that she could finish high school there.[19] She graduated in 1995 and migrated shortly thereafter to live with her parents in Russia.

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[19] As mentioned in previous chapters, graduation from high school in Armenia came after ten, not twelve, years.

Life in Russia: University, Marriage, and Children

Fleeing the instability around her in Krasnoyselsk, Anna moved 1600 miles north to Kirov, Russia. Having studied the Russian language since the second grade, Anna had still mainly relied on Armenian to communicate in Krasnoyselsk; however, in Kirov, she said, "I improved my Russian skills so I can speak, write, and read better than before" (Interview 1, July 6, 2012). While in Kirov, she began her university education, a very scary step for her as a second-language Russian speaker. She recalled, "It was so hard because I didn't know well Russian… I cried every day. I said, 'No, I can't go, I can't learn!' My mom said, 'You have to, you must… because you are smart, and you should.'" (Interview 5, August 7, 2012). Anna lived with and was supported by her parents during this time, and she said, "My mom did everything, I just had to learn" (Interview 5, August 7, 2012). Anna was successful in her university work and went on to earn a six-year law degree; although she did not pursue a law career after her graduation, she still saw this as an impressive accomplishment, primarily because it was completed in her second language.

After graduation, rather than pursuing a career, she got married in 2001 and gave birth to her daughters in 2002 and 2005. She said that at first, before the children were born, her husband talked about wanting to have male children, but once the girls were born, he quickly came around. "When I was pregnant, my husband said, 'I want a boy! I want a boy!' But when they were born, he loved them so much. And he said, 'I can't imagine my life without them,'" she recalled (Interview 1, July 6, 2012). As Anna described herself as she was in Russia, she explained that she was always quiet and reserved; before she was married, her grandmother would try to spur her on to be more outgoing and assertive in social situations, but she resisted.

In fact, it was not until her husband encouraged her to be her own woman that she first felt empowered to do so.

> One time in Russia, I had to do … some paperwork for my kids. And I said, "Oh my god, [says her husband's name], please come with me, come with me! You should talk with this person!" He said, "No, You can go by yourself, and you… have to learn how to talk with people, how to be independent." So I said, "Okay," and went and I did everything by myself… But before that, before I got married, before, I was always shy… But now, now I'm okay." (Interview 5, August 7, 2012)

Though she did not speak at length about her time there, she nevertheless considered Russia another place to call home, and a place that she now dearly misses. "My kids were born there, so it's a good memory," she said. "I met [my husband] there, I graduated, I did everything there," she continued (Interview 3, July 20, 2012). The life she and her family were building together in Russia was a modest but satisfying one; her husband owned a small shoe repair business, her older daughter had just entered kindergarten, and she was happy to stay home and take care of the house and children. After already living through two major migrations, the first to Krasnoyselsk and the second to Kirov, Anna learned that her husband's parents, recently naturalized American citizens, had "won a green card" (Interview 5, August 7, 2012) for her family to move to America, and in 2007, after selling the family business and the bulk of their possessions, they immigrated to the United States.

Traveling to the Present: Another New Country, Another New Language

At first, Anna was reluctant about moving and adjusting to a new life in America. Though she and her husband ultimately decided in favor of the change, Anna's first reaction was one of shock. She remembered thinking, "Why did this happen to us? Why? It's gonna change

your life, like this [gestures like a circle, or 360-degree turn]. 100% change you. No, we don't

want to move" (Interview 5, August 7, 2012). Their life in Russia was satisfying, but Anna's

husband was in favor of the move. "He said, 'This is a chance... We don't want to go to

America. Here [Russia], we lived, everything is okay, but if — it's a chance. Let's try. Let's

don't lose this chance. Maybe, if nothing, we can go back,'" she recalled him saying (Interview

5, August 7, 2012). Anna's fears stemmed in part from financial insecurity, imagining America

as a place where the people who live well have so many things that they discard them

unthinkingly; her main insecurity, though, was about her lack of English. She characterized

herself as being a kind of third-class citizen, with Americans who speak English placing first and

non-Americans who speak English placing second; non-Americans without English were in the

third and lowest place. Having to ask someone for help understanding her mail and other printed

materials was especially degrading.

> I said, "My god, why did we come here?" I don't understand, I have to give my mail —
>
> somebody has to read and translate, and sometimes people don't like that. They said,
>
> "Oh, I have my work to do, I don't want to help you." (Interview 5, August 7, 2012)

Although not being able to read the mail was a problem, what was worse was not having the

language required to communicate with anyone outside of her home and, most importantly, to

take care of her children.

> When we first came here... I could only stay at home and do nothing because... I don't
>
> know how I will communicate with people if we don't know English. And they ask me
>
> something, I don't understand. You are like an animal. Yeah! It's a bad word... I'm
>
> gonna tell you some stories. Five years ago, my daughter, she was sick, my younger one,
>
> and we called emergency. And she had a seizure. Yeah, she had a seizure and we can't

speak English. How can we call emergency and they ask you many questions and you

don't know?! Thank god we have good neighbors. They lived in America for twenty

years and they can speak English very fluently. I walked to them and knocked on the

door and said, "Please, help my daughter!" (Interview 2, July 13, 2012)

And after this particular event, Anna decided it was time to prioritize learning English in

her new American home.

Learning English at School and at Work

Anna's first move toward overcoming her linguistic insecurity was to enroll in a few non-

credit ESL courses at a local private vocational school. Since she already knew the Latin

alphabet from her German studies, she was able to quickly access the letter-level of the written

materials, and that was an important first step. She said that after being in the class with other

English learners for about three months, she started to speak English outside the classroom, and

after about eight months at the vocational school, she decided to take the next step and enroll in

credit-bearing ESL classes at Fernando College. She went through the full six-course sequence

of courses at Fernando, but one of the drawbacks, she said, was that since the majority of

students were of Armenian heritage, they spoke Armenian in class, and this distracted her from

focusing on learning English.

Many, many people [in these ESL classes] can't speak English because all the time they

speak with each other Armenian, even when the teacher said, "Please, don't talk

Armenian, speak English."… If [there were] no Armenians, it's better to learn English

very fast. If everybody around you is Armenian people, and they are talking only

Armenian, how are you gonna learn English? (Interview 1, July 6, 2012)

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Still, Anna cites several instances of positive learning experiences in her ESL courses at Fernando, including her first visit to the college library, reading her first book in English, and participating in a class with a teacher who had high expectations, which she said helped her to achieve more than if she was expected to do comparatively little with English in her classes. She remarked, "If the teacher is easy, students are just gonna waste their time [and] go home, do the other cooking, cleaning, no homework. The students say, 'This teacher is excellent!' but they can't learn anything that way. Nothing" (Interview 1, July 6, 2012).

After Anna had completed the first three ESL courses at Fernando, she was offered a temporary job through California's Welfare-to-Work program, known as Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN). This job at a local municipal court office required light office work and some basic English translation for Armenian and Russian speakers, and it gave Anna her first opportunity to speak English with people who were not her fellow students.

> In that time my English was not so good, but I can talk… and they hired me. And I worked in the court… I filled out all the papers, and I sent [them to] my childcare worker, and then she said, "I can't believe that [Anna] is gonna work in the court because she doesn't know English!" And the woman [who hired me] said to her, "She doesn't know English? You are so wrong! Because [Anna] knows English very well… She can work in the court… She can speak English. And better than you!" Yeah, I was so proud… That's why I'm powerful and strong now. I can say, yes, I know English, I can — maybe I'm doing mistakes…some words are not correct, but I can understand people, explain something to them, and they can understand me. (Interview 7, August 21, 2012)

Under the provisions of her GAIN work agreement, Anna worked at the court for a period of one year while she continued to study at Fernando. Then, after completing her GAIN work

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assignment and her ESL courses, Anna began taking other general education classes, which also focused on English. Her descriptions of these courses highlighted the importance she placed on formal, standard features of error-free writing — though the passage below also highlights how she understands the difference between expectations in writing and in speaking — and the continued sense of linguistic insecurity and inaccuracy that she felt in comparison to "native speakers" (Interview 6, August 17, 2012).

> I think when you know the rules, you always… try to use that. Now when I want to do something, I always remember how to write the independent sentence, clause, dependent clause, comma. I always try to [not] forget that when I learn, and when I am going to write something, I always use that grammar. For speaking, though, no. Speaking is gonna happen very fast, so I don't have time to think. But for writing, I always try to be — write punctuation or use nice words… When I started to learn this, I wanted to learn correctly. But native speakers, they already … know all those things. And for them it doesn't matter if they do a mistake, they know the language already. But people who learn, like, from the beginning, for them it's very important to learn correctly, to say correctly. I know I'm never gonna see that [native speakers] make a mistake because I don't understand if it's a mistake or not. But when I'm gonna talk… they will see my mistakes. (Interview 6, August 17, 2012)

Anna's Multilingualism: Helping Others, Helping Herself

Today, Anna's different contexts in America provide her with opportunities to use all three of her languages regularly. In her home, she usually speaks Armenian with her children, insisting that they use it as well, so as not to forget it; however, since she feels that part of her job as a mother is to help them with schoolwork — a responsibility she seems to have inherited from

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her own mother — those discussions often involve English. Her oldest daughter was speaking Russian as a toddler before they moved to America, so Anna sometimes speaks Russian with her, also in the hopes that she will not lose the language entirely. Since she met her husband in Russia, they often speak Russian together, but Armenian is the spoken language Anna most associates with her home. That said, her other languages also feature prominently in some other situations. For example, although she does not subscribe to paid Russian television channels, she likes to watch movies on Russian websites, and she reads Russian news online as well. "I try all the time to use my Russian… I don't want to lose that," she remarked (Interview 6, August 17, 2012). She accesses other media in Armenian and English since Armenian television channels are part of basic cable, and she enjoys reading the news from English websites. An additional important part of her daily routine is reading her family's mail, exclusively in English; the ability to navigate this small part of her day is quite a triumph for her, especially in contrast to the shame she felt at not being able to read her English-language mail when she first arrived. That her home reading activity is often in English might help explain a phenomenon she discovered in the course of our interviews, which is that despite her daily oral use of all three languages, she writes nearly everything in English, and what little she writes in Armenian or Russian is still written exclusively with Latin characters. She said, "I write… only English now! Even when — with my husband, we write something…some notes, I don't know how it happened. Only English!... When I want to write something, it's only English. I don't know why" (Interview 5, August 7, 2012).

Outside of her home, she uses English for her school activities; furthermore, as she determined early on in her studies at Fernando, she holds strongly to the notion that using other languages interferes with her acquisition of English. To Anna, English is the language of

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America, and it is "the first thing you must learn if you want to live well here" (Interview 3, July 20, 2012). As Anna talked about her use of languages both inside and outside of her home, she also clearly conveyed the idea that her multilingualism serves as a vehicle to help others as well as herself. In fact, nearly every interview referenced how she has helped others with her ability to navigate in multiple languages. Helping her husband in his business and her children with their English-language homework are two of the most common ways that she uses her languages in the service of others. Additionally, as a student worker in the multilingual Fernando College Learning Center, she is proud to be able to assist students in more than just English. "Many times we do this. We say, 'Of course, if you can't speak English we can help you in Armenian, or we can help you in Russian.' Oh good, good, it's very helpful!" (Interview 1, July 6, 2012). During the summer of our interviews, Anna was also helping her in-laws with some court procedures; despite their being citizens, they are not fluent in English, and after the court proceedings, Anna said, "My mother-in-law told the lawyer, she said, 'I am very proud of [Anna] because she's here only four and a half years, and now she came with us to translate'" (Interview 3, July 20, 2012). Anna further described another recent incident in which her neighbor needed her help translating details of an accident investigation from Armenian to English. She recalled, "She [my neighbor] called me, said, [Anna], please could you help translate? I said yes! Of course I can help" (Interview 5, August 7, 2012). That incident in particular reminded her of the time she needed a translator to help her daughter who was having a seizure, and so as a neighbor and multilingual, English-speaking member of the Armenian community, she sees an important part of her duties as using her languages to help others. As she stated during yet another of our interviews, "I understand English and I help people [by] translating" (Interview 5, August 7, 2012).

In addition to using her multilingualism in the service of others, Anna is also very cognizant of the ways in which, by being multilingual in America, she has been able to help herself. However, whereas her ability to help others involved the use of all three of her languages, it is her use of English that she identifies as being the key to helping her adapt and thrive in her new country.

> I want to say that if you live here, everything is gonna happen, everything. And you have to prepare, have to be ready, and the first most important thing [is] you have to learn the language where you live. If you live in Germany, you have to know German. You live in France, you learn French. If you live here, you have to know English. (Interview 2, July 13, 2012)

Knowing English for Anna is a way for her to exercise independence and to do what needs to be done for her family; she added, "It's helpful for yourself… Maybe some time you can be in some situation when you are gonna need that language, and it helps only you, not somebody else" (Interview 3, July 20, 2012). Continuing on this topic of self-reliance, she stated, "Who can help you? Nobody. You have some responsibilities and you have to do in English because… you live here. If you live here, it's… already your country. You must learn English" (Interview 2, July 13, 2012). She also knows that while her Armenian and Russian languages might someday play a part in helping her get a job, no longer having to write "only a little bit English" on her resumé is both a boon to her job qualifications and to her self-confidence. "I can understand how helpful English is for me," she summarized (Interview 2, July 13, 2012).

Anna in America: Woman/Wife[20] and Mother

Since coming to America, Anna has been working toward general education credits at Fernando College, though not necessarily with an end goal beyond an Associate's degree. Rather than having set goals toward a more advanced American degree and career, she sees her primary jobs at present as being useful as a wife and mother, two roles that she takes seriously and with pride. Early on in her American life, Anna sensed that she was less assertive and more docile than what she considered an average American woman, but she also understood that her personality was hers, and could not be easily changed, and that there was room for diversity in women's ways. "I am proud of them [less traditional women] because, you know, they are different. They are not like me. They can be like… men… They are strong, you know… independent. I'm independent too, but… they are not… shy [like I am]" (Interview 4, July 27, 2012). Though she is quick to say that she does what her husband expects her to with regard to raising children and taking care of the house, she understands that her relationship with her husband is one of mutual respect, and their roles in the home both involve some difficult jobs. She told a story of how on a recent evening, her husband called her from work and asked her to prepare "something special" for dinner and then clean their house for a visit from his parents. Although tired, she did what she was asked, but not because she felt forced to.

> I wanted to say, "I can't!" But I can't say, "No. I don't have time." I can't do that… because he's doing lots of things for me, so when he asks me something, I'm gonna do it for him too… And anyway, I want my home to be clean too. (Interview 2, July 13, 2012)

Despite her willingness to assume a more traditional female role in her home by taking primary responsibility for the kids and the housekeeping, Anna nevertheless differentiates herself

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[20] Interestingly, in Armenian, the word for *woman* is the same as for *wife*: կին (IPA transcription: [kin]).

from some other Armenian wives and mothers she knows, specifically because of her motivation and ability to learn English and take other college classes; that her husband is in favor of her learning English and going to school differentiates him from some other Armenian men she has encountered here as well.

> It's very good, education. You have to always be educated, always learning. Some women said, "Oh, I don't need it, I don't have time! Let's just sit and drink coffee!" Sometimes my neighbor's husband said to her, "Just stay home with the kids. I don't want you to go somewhere and learn. I'm gonna help you and always do things for you. That's okay, don't learn English." But I think it's not right. Maybe tomorrow something will happen. She has to know how to [do things on her own]. (Interview 2, July 13, 2012)

Anna further characterized the roles of herself, her husband, and her children with a metaphor she learned from her grandmother. In this metaphor, the family is like a bird; the father is the bird's head, the mother is the neck, and the kids are the wings, since they eventually learn to fly away. However, this does not mean that the father, as the head of the family, is always in charge. As she explained, "… many people understand that the neck is more important than the head because the head only moves where the neck goes first [she gestures by moving her head back and forth, to illustrate that the neck determines the direction of the head]" (Interview 2, July 13, 2012).

By far, beyond her duties as a wife and student, it is her job as the mother of two young daughters that she considers her most important duty at present. Among the responsibilities that this duty carries, making sure that the children retain their Armenian language is one of the most significant. At ages seven and ten, they have both been speaking English for as long as or longer than they spoke their other home languages in Russia, and while they regularly converse with

each other in English, Anna insists that they speak Armenian with her and her husband, telling them, "You can speak English outside!" (Interview 5, August 7, 2012). Still, she has noticed that as they have gotten older, her maternal job of helping them with homework has involved more and more English as the years have passed. "When I help them with homework," she explained, "I explain to them in English. If I explain in Armenian, they don't understand. I have to…explain in English" (Interview 1, July 6, 2012). In this way, similar to Lilit, though Armenian is their home language, their school language is English, and so when they do school activities at home, they do them in English.

Anna in America: Moving and *Missing*

As Anna narrated events of her life story, her sense of reflection and nostalgia sometimes belied her age. She talked about how she remembered some of the comforts of communism, and how things were somehow easier in the time before cell phones and technology, when she could run home through the countryside during her lunch time at school, and not have to worry about some of the dangers or fears she associates now with city life. Regarding this hearkening back to a better, somehow easier time in the past, she said, "[M]aybe people my age are gonna think when I talk to them, they will say, you are like a grandma! 80 years old!" (Interview 6, August 17, 2012). On her youth, she remarked, "Everything was simple, everything was clear, yeah, and you could trust people" (Interview 5, August 7, 2012). Still, Anna is proud of her accomplishments in America, especially her relatively quick acquisition of academic-level English and her ability to navigate her life and responsibilities in her new language. She is grateful to a system that has allowed her to go to school for free and provided her with other forms of financial assistance as a new immigrant. She no longer feels like a third-class citizen, like an "animal" without English (Interview 2, July 13, 2012); "sometimes I think I'm in the

same line like the other people who already knew English before I did. I reached them. Maybe with an accent or something else, but I reached them," she said (Interview 7, August 21, 2012).

Nevertheless, feeling some comfort alongside mild disbelief that America is her home now, she still cannot shake the feeling that she is missing something here, being away from Armenia and Russia.

When I lived in Russia, Armenian for me was "My Armenia!" I wanted to go back to Armenia. Now, [after I left] Russia, I'm doing the same thing with Russia. I don't know why. Just…*Missing*. I *miss*. This word, *miss*. I hate this word, because all my life, I miss somebody. When I lived in Russia, I missed my grandparents, everybody. All the time I cried, "No, no, no!" Now I am here, and I miss my parents… Now, oh my gosh, I can't imagine. I will die when my kids get married and go somewhere else, again *miss*…. And *missing*, all the time, it is knocking on my door. I open, I say, "Welcome, welcome." I don't want to say it, but I do. (Interview 6, August 17, 2012)

Traveling Into the Future: Hope Amid Uncertainty

Constantly aware of the *missing* lying in wait, Anna's ideas about what the future holds for her are somewhat uncertain, though strengthened by the knowledge that she has the ability to adapt to new surroundings, as she has proven to herself throughout her past migrations. Her most definite plans following our summer of interviews involved continuing her general education coursework at Fernando College, enrolling her daughters in Armenian heritage language classes, and becoming a naturalized citizen of the United States during the 2012-2013 academic year; beyond that, her musings on the future were hazy but generally hopeful. Ideally, seeing her kids settled and doing well in school, she would like to get a job, "one job… a good job" (Interview 4, July 27, 2012), something that would provide a steady income and not require bringing work

home. Outside of this job, she said, "then [I could] help my husband, and… every year maybe I can go visit my parents. If I have some more money, I can go two times [a year]. One time to Armenia, second time to Russia" (Interview 5, August 7, 2012). She envisions her daughters growing up to "be like American girls… be free in this free country" (Interview 2, July 13, 2012), while retaining their Armenian language and, she hopes, also retaining some aspects of her traditional Armenian woman's lifestyle. She explained, "I want to tell my kids, maybe look how I am, be the same like me… take everything good from me" (Interview 2, July 13, 2012). "They have to be a good mother, wife. And you have to every time remember that you are a woman, you have to be a good mother …the Armenian tradition is different [but] I think it's good," she continued (Interview 2, July 13, 2012).

Possibilities for her future involve someday being able to visit Artsvashen again and even perhaps going back to live in Russia, but she did not convey any sense of certainty about these plans. Mirroring Mazar's motto, *On vivra, on verra* — We will live, and we will see — she said, "You know, tomorrow you don't know what's gonna happen. You have to be always ready. Ready for something" (Interview 4, July 27, 2012). She went on, "We want to live here, but you never know. I don't know, because always I am moving… After USA, maybe I'm gonna go to the end of the world! I'm not sure this is the last place" (Interview 3, July 20, 2012). Despite her stated uncertainty about settling down, there remains the underlying sense that she is tired of having to move, learn new languages, and constantly adjust to new surroundings. In her words:

I'm gonna tell you the truth. I'm tired of learning. I — All my life, I'm learning something… Maybe it would be easy in one, my own language, Armenian. I can agree to learn something in all Armenian, but different languages — Oh my gosh, it's hard! It's

good, but it's hard…. Maybe it's written here [she points to her forehead] "You have to

learn all your life!" I said, "No! Please, I can't! I'm done!" (Interview 5, August 7, 2012)

Still, in the midst of this uncertainty, she holds closely to the idea that wherever she ends up, her

knowledge of English will be able to serve her well. "English is international…when you know

English, you can communicate with people in the world… If we move again to Russia or

Armenia, it's good for us [to] know English, and we can find some job which will use English,"

(Interview 7, August 21, 2012).

Interpreting Anna's Journey: Language, Culture, and Gender

Anna's narrative touches on a number of themes foregrounded by the other participants.

For example, regarding her early literacy practices, her story contrasts with the others, such as

Root, in that her preschool years were not as immersed in print literacy as Root's were; however,

her journey is similar to some of the others with, for instance, her first grade celebration of the

aibenaran. As for later literacy practices, her story is similar to the others with its emphasis on

the acquisition of the standard written form, but different in her trajectory's emphasis on the

Russian language in her first experiences with postsecondary work. Another language-focused

theme Anna shares with the other participants is how she has used her languages in the service of

others, shedding positive, self-affirming light on her role as a type of multilingual language

broker (Morales & Hanson, 2005) within her Armenian and Russian language communities. Like

Lilit, Anna's ability to navigate her children's English-language school materials has proven to

be an important duty in her role as the mother and family caretaker; all four participants have

further shared English as a *language of school* in their studies at Fernando, though with differing

expectations for how they anticipate using English in the future. Of all of the participants,

Anna's narrative is the one that most highlights how English is becoming an international

language, and how she might continue to use her English as linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1990; Flowerdew & Miller, 2008) even if she eventually finds herself in a location in the outer or expanding circle (Kachru, 1990) where English is not a common first language. Even in America, an inner-circle context, she discovered that she now writes nearly exclusively in English, with her sporadic use of other written languages also relying on her knowledge of the Latin alphabet; this discovery has led her to acknowledge that even though English is her third language, it is nevertheless *hers*, and this sense of ownership is indeed a potent discovery.

Anna's narrative further illustrates a number of connections among her language(s), culture(s), and gender. For example, among the participants, Anna is the most amenable to assuming a more traditional role as an Armenian woman, which contrasts with Lilit's and Mazar's stories of openly questioning the status quo. The most recent immigrant of the participants, she is also the least settled into her new life in America; having experienced upheavals and migrations since the age of five, the possibility for more migrations seems the most tangible to her, compared to the relative sense of settlement that the other participants conveyed in their stories. As a result, Anna's narrative is the one that most evokes the notion of transnationalism, with its emphasis on the sustained possibility for border-crossing and her more "temporary and circular migration" (Vertovec, 2009, p. 121) compared to the other women. Like the other participants, Anna's story directly identifies the connection between nation and language, first by associating the Armenian nation with the Armenian language, and then by connecting the country of the United States to the English language in use here; in Anna's case, this connection between America and English is even more clear in her characterization of three types of people, with the lowest rung, non-Americans who do not know English, akin to alingual animals. As a dedicated student who has navigated multiple school contexts, she has been able,

with concerted effort, to move up that ladder, to a position where her English can make her feel "powerful and strong" (Interview 7, August 21, 2012). While her story sometimes highlights her feelings of linguistic insecurity, her ability to use all of her languages to her benefit is also a trait that, to varying degrees within varying contexts, all of the participants share.

CHAPTER EIGHT

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, REFLECTIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

[D]espite knowing that the participants live on and the story continues, one is forced to

draw an arbitrary line in the sand and declare the story has ended. This is a real tension

for narrative inquirers, because declaring the story finished contradicts basic

epistemological beliefs and impacts the participants. We as researchers believe that

humans re-story their lives constantly, reinterpreting events in the light of the stories that

are currently available and important to them. New events or experiences may force

reinterpretation of past experiences, and participants who once embraced a particular

interpretation of their experience may eventually come to understand it very differently.

However, when as researchers we come to write up the definitive account of the research,

we fix the story such that it can no longer be altered, and we remove the possibility of

restorying. (Bell, 2011, p. 576)

As I draw the line in the sand to declare an end to my participants' stories, I am at once

reminded of Root's notion of re-seeing events through the lens of hindsight, a notion that echoes

other past findings in narrative research, those which highlight narrative's function in helping

participants make sense of their lived experiences (e.g., Bangeni & Kapp, 2007; Menard-

Warwick, 2004). With that in mind, I find profound comfort in knowing that, upon completing

this dissertation, I can go back and re-see the interviews, write-up period, follow-up meetings,

member checking, and other activities associated with putting this study together and sharing its

findings. This chapter, of course, focuses on those findings, which themselves, I hope, can be the

root of even more *narrative knowledging* (Barkhuizen, 2011) about multilingual immigrant

women's experiences in America. Without question, I have learned far more than what I set out

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to investigate, and the information and insights gathered for this study — so much more than mere *data* — far exceed what this genre allows me to chronicle. For now, though, on to the genre-specific chronicling.

Revisiting the Research Questions and Purposes of the Study

I began this research endeavor with the intention of filling a gap I had identified in the TESOL literature, the space where these stories of multilingual Armenian immigrant women now reside. Chapters Four through Seven addressed the first research question, which was: *What are the participants' past and present experiences with living in multiple languages and literacies? In other words, what language and literacy history emerges from each participant's narratives?* And now this chapter addresses the second research question: *What insights about the intersections of language, culture, and gender emerge from the narratives?*

In addition and related to what the feminist perspective deems the intrinsic value of the stories of women, especially women whose stories have not before been given the time or space for telling, I identified four interconnected purposes for my study. The first purpose was to address the absence of inquiry into the adult lives of Armenian immigrant women in America. Through the lens of the participants' language and literacy histories, a slice of their lived experiences has now come to light. Because of the feminist, participant-driven interviews, the histories, which began with a focus on language and literacy, were able to assume different trajectories, so that the data provide a view into not only their languages and literacies, but also their ideas about education and gender roles, among other issues. That is not to suggest that these topics are discrete and unrelated; the interconnectedness that has been addressed in past research (e.g., Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2003; Intersectionality, 2007; Menard-Warwick, 2009) is also evident in this study.

The second purpose of this research was to learn more about Armenian women who are the mothers of students in contemporary public schools. While some past research has delved into the experiences of elementary and secondary students of Armenian heritage (e.g., King, 2007; Samkian, 2007), understanding those students' family literacy practices from the parental perspective can help further inform researchers and teachers about the roots of their students' relationships with multiple languages. With this purpose in mind, Lilit's and Anna's histories address the value they place on their children's multilingualism, but this study also revealed some aspects of the role of the extended family in children's experiences with literacy, as illustrated in Root's past with her young uncle and her present with her young grandchildren.

This study's third purpose was to learn more about the literacy practices of multilingual people across the age span, and working with participants with a thirty-year age span between the youngest and oldest helped to fulfill this purpose. Insights gleaned from the participants highlight the importance of *not* making assumptions about the effect of age on different types of literacy practices; for example, Mazar and Root, the older participants, made more reference to their use of technology in accessing multilingual materials than did the younger Lilit and Anna. This type of finding (like Cowie & Sakui, 2013 and Wuebker, 2013) speaks to ways that teachers can prepare students across age groups to use technology to their advantage in their language-learning activities.

The fourth purpose of this study was to understand some of the ways in which a group of women initially identified by their shared characteristics — multilingual, Armenian, and immigrant — differ with regard to their language and literacy histories. This purpose, to understand the *diversity within*, is of utmost importance in work that aims to particularize, rather than essentialize, participants in a group making its first major appearance in the literature.

Moreover, this aim of examining the diversity within a larger group has been key to critical work in applied linguistics since the early days of identity studies (e.g., Norton, 1997) and continues to be a crucial area of exploration today (e.g., Achugar & Carpenter, 2012; Garza-Reyna, 2011). Participants in the current study illustrated a range of differences, including early family literacy practices, experiences with third and fourth languages, exposure to higher education in their first language, and gender roles assumed in their homes. Along with the discussion of the other major situated meanings and interpretive themes identified in the study, these elements of diversity are explored more in the next section.

Understanding the Narratives: Situated Meanings and Interpretive Themes

The participants' narratives in Chapters Four through Seven serve as the means to answer this study's first research question: *What are the participants' past and present experiences with living in multiple languages and literacies? In other words, what language and literacy history emerges from each participant's narratives?* The goal of the present section is to address the study's second research question: *What additional insights about the intersections of language, culture, and gender emerge from the narratives?* To answer this question, I analyzed the raw data and the co-constructed narrative chapters with the aim of determining specific situated meanings (Gee, 2011) of key words and phrases that the participants mentioned in relation to their ideas about language, culture, and gender. At the same time as this analytical task was taking place, I was also listening closely to the data to identify salient themes that cut across the participant narratives and that addressed the intertwining nature of the women's languages, culture, and gender.

That said, it is important to acknowledge that the participants talked about these topics based on my asking about them, so in that regard, I clearly had a hand in directing the content of

the interviews. Still, not all participants were equally interested in talking about all aspects of the study; for example, Lilit was very keen on talking about women's issues in the Armenian community, but Root was more focused on outlining her ideas about languages and literacies. This explains why, in some cases, the individual elements presented for analysis here do not necessarily include data from all four of the participants.

Situated Meanings

Rather than deciding *a priori* which words and phrases would be addressed in this section, I aimed to let the data speak for itself. Still, while understanding that I aimed to prioritize the women's voices over mine, the study's purposes of investigating languages and literacies, coupled with the study's feminist and critical framework, nevertheless played a strong role in determining what the women actually talked about in our meetings. Thus a combination of the women's stories, the study's purposes, and the study's framework all led to identifying a few terms that emerged as significant across the narratives. These terms, summarized below, are *woman, literacy, language knowledge,* and *English.*

Woman. The participants' language and literacy histories highlight some shared as well as some divergent ideas about what it means, especially in Armenian and American society, to be a woman; as such, the narratives help self-define the *Armenian Immigrant Women* in the title of this dissertation. As immigrants in America, none of the participants lives exclusively in Armenian society anymore, but their ideas about what is expected of women and how they themselves conform to or defy those expectations are rooted in their experiences as women of the Armenian community. For starters, two of the narratives define *woman* in contrast to *man*, immediately calling to mind one of Weedon's (1997) opening statements on poststructural feminism: "In patriarchal discourse, the nature and social role of women are defined in relation

to a norm which is male" (pp. 1-2). On the subject of her working in male-dominated contexts, Mazar stated:

> We were, I think, three women in my time. But I mean we were like "men-women" because we had our work, our behavior…We said, yes, I am woman, by sex, but with my work, what I am doing, I am like a man [she gestures to flex muscles and show strength]. I am like a man, I have my voice, I am independent. (Mazar, Interview 5, July 31, 2012)

> In this case, women who perform their gender in a certain way (Butler, 1990) are less like women and more like men; women here are identified as beings who do not inherently have a voice or a sense of independence, since those are qualities more associated with men. This quality is echoed in Anna's narrative, when she further defines women as not only more dependent but also less strong and assertive than their male counterparts. As she talked about the differences between her and other women, she said, "I am proud of them [less traditional women] because, you know, they are different. They are not like me. They can be like… men… They are strong, you know…independent. I'm independent too, but…they are not…shy [like I am]" (Anna, Interview 4, July 27, 2012). Lilit's narrative further explains what she sees as the default "quiet Armenian woman" when she declares that *quiet* is exactly what she is *not* (Lilit, Interview 3, July 19, 2012), and Anna's story highlights more about this idealized traditional Armenian woman, especially when she describes herself with that label and announces her hopes that her daughters will grow up to embody it as well. For Anna, this means, among other things, deferring to her husband's wishes even if she is tired; though Anna sees this deference as part of the mutual respect she shares with her husband, it is still something she expects from her daughters' future relationships, a hope which further defines the ideal woman as married and exclusively heterosexual. Lilit's and Anna's contrasting descriptions of how they behave in

particular ways to enact elements of their gender further speak to the nature of gender as a performative and context-specific construct (Butler, 1990; Weedon, 1997).

Literacy. For all of the participants, the term *literacy* is one rooted in the traditions of print; to be literate is, at minimum, to be able to read and write. With the definition understood similarly among the women, I did not push them to question it or tease out alternative or more contemporary definitions that link literacy to more multimodal forms of knowledge (akin to Baynman & Prinsloo, 2009; Gee, 2008). While that type of questioning would be a useful line of later inquiry and is briefly addressed in the upcoming section on literacy practices, I felt that injecting too much theory into these conversational interviews would serve more to privilege my and not the participants' points of view. All of the participants further referenced how literacy-through-writing is most ideally expressed, with an emphasis on a standard and correct form, dictated from the letter level through quality judgments on their handwriting, to the sentence level through reverence for specific elements of syntax and mechanics such as verb tense and punctuation.

The situated meanings of the participants' literacy-through-reading were more nuanced than the ideas they articulated about standard, correct writing. Rather than emphasizing the letter- or sentence-level details of decoding and comprehending print material, reading for the participants was associated more with the role it played in providing them access to information and knowledge. For instance, Mazar talked about how daily reading of "newspapers and articles" inform her of "what happens in the world" and how reading in general connects her to new ideas. She explained:

Why [do] we read? Why we read book- books? Why? I read books to *enrichir* …to enrich our spiritual life, right? To learn some new ideas, some… new words. Because

when I read, maybe one word, I don't know. [She flips through a French-language book that she brought with her] Reading is that, no? You spend your time by enriching yourself. To learn also … to learn something. (Mazar, Interview 2, July 12, 2012)

In addition to representing knowledge and self-enrichment, the ability to read for Anna was associated with her basic humanity and her independence, since before she could read in English, she was "like an animal" (Anna, Interview 2, July 13, 2012) who depended on others to read her mail for her, and acquiring literacy in her new language was a crucial source of independence.

[At] first it was very, very hard for me because I can't read. I can't — when I got mail, even I couldn't read, and I had no idea what it's about. I have to take to somebody and they translated for me. It was so hard. You can't every time bother people … so I said, okay, I'm gonna learn and do everything by myself. (Anna, Interview 1, July 6, 2012)

Language Knowledge. Beyond serving as a source of knowledge and independence, literacy was identified as a required element of language knowledge; in this way, the women's narratives further help self-define the *Multilingual* in this dissertation's title. Root was particularly vocal about the connection between literacy and language knowledge, explaining that being able "to speak only, it doesn't mean that you know the language" (Root, Interview 5, October 30, 2012); one must also learn the literacy of that language. That said, the ability to speak fluently, to have communicative competence (Hymes, 1979), was also part of Root's language knowledge equation, since knowing details about the syntax and vocabulary of a language did not automatically mean that she could use it for communication. She explained this with reference to her Spanish classes at Fernando College:

I wrote the tests, I put the verbs in the very, very correct forms. I could find out from the text the correct words without understanding the text. Just, you know, the grammar

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intuition. But when the time [came] to explain, to talk in Spanish, no! No! (Root, Interview 5, October 30, 2012)

Lilit took this idea of communicative competence a step further when she described the preparations she made for her children to visit Armenia in 2011. While her children were used to speaking Armenian at home and were also taking Armenian heritage language classes to learn the writing system, what they had not yet been exposed to were more informal Armenian terms, including "bad words", what Lilit referred to as "street language" (Lilit, Interview 1, July 3, 2012). To Lilit, her children's awareness of and ability to use this element of Armenian was also an important part of their truly knowing the language.

English. The participants' various ways of talking about English indicated that its situated meanings are numerous and complex. English was viewed by the participants as a challenge to overcome, and in some cases, a rather difficult one; for example, Anna mentioned that learning English was much harder than studying Armenian or Russian, lending narrative evidence to the theory that it is generally harder to learn a new language after a so-called "critical period" (Lenneberg, 1967; Pinker, 1994). Moreover, English was identified by all of the participants as the language of America; Mazar said, "Now this country, this is — in this country, they speak English" (Mazar, Interview 1, July 5, 2012), a statement that speaks to the underlying connection between nation and language (e.g., Joseph, 2004) that was also addressed as the participants talked about the connections between the Armenian language and the Armenian nation. Beyond this national tie, English was still considered an important language outside of the United States, since, as Anna said, even in Armenia, students "learn English because now English is [more] important than Russian or the other languages" (Anna, Interview 1, July 6, 2012). With that in mind, though Root saw the internationalization of English as

something positive and helpful as a lingua franca across global cultures, Anna's take, especially on the status of English in Armenia, was far more threatening; remarking on her observation that in Armenia, some of the linguistic landscape (Shohamy, Ben-Rafael, & Barni, 2010) featured signs exclusively in English, Anna said:

No! You have to first write Armenian, then English, because it's Yerevan, it's Armenia! I know many, many more people from the other countries, they come to Yerevan, visitor or something else, but [they need to] write something, not only in English. It has to be Armenian or English together, or Russian maybe. (Anna, Interview 7, August 21, 2012)

Anna, Lilit, and Root also mentioned ways in which English was considered the language of school, both the school of the young people in their families, whom they regularly helped with homework, as well as the language of their own schooling at Fernando College; an interesting exception to the latter was that, for Anna, English was seemingly *not* the language of her ESL classes. On her experience in Fernando's ESL classrooms, she said, "I spoke Armenian [there] because …in (Fernando) College, the most of people are Armenian. That['s] why the many, many people, they can't speak English!" (Anna, Interview 1, July 6, 2012). On a related note, though Anna and Mazar mentioned their use of the Internet for watching Russian-language films, English was considered by Lilit to be the overall language of the Internet, and of the written research materials available there, which she also used for school; she remarked, "I'm doing my research in English because I couldn't find anything — whatever I need, I couldn't find it in Armenian. We don't have more information [in Armenian]" (Lilit, Interview 3, July 19. 2012).

From Situated Meanings to Interpretive Themes

With an understanding of how the participants conceptualized these key terms — though without necessarily having to accept a consensus across the narratives — I now turn to a

discussion of some of the prominent themes that emerged from the data as I considered connections among the participants' languages, culture, and gender.

        Women's roles in Armenian culture: A continuum of acceptance and rejection. As mentioned in Chapter Two, Armenian culture is patriarchal, with traditional views on the roles females are expected to assume from childhood through maturity. Passages from the participants' language and literacy histories speak to this general notion while at times illustrating instances of rejecting it. Take, for example, the case of Lilit, whose narrative highlighted how young girls were expected to adhere to stringent dress restrictions, being accompanied by their father or another male of the family when making new clothing purchases to ensure their modesty. These behaviors, as enacted or rejected by Lilit herself and others around her, further illustrate the performative nature of gender (Butler, 1990). In her story, Lilit also talked about how girls were expected to be quiet and agreeable at school, pointing out how she had both male and female teachers with these expectations, and how she ended her high school years with a novel sense of autonomy granted by her school principal, who encouraged her independent streak. In her interviews, she also mentioned strict school dress codes and regulations prohibiting makeup and jewelry, all relating to the idea that Armenian schoolgirls were expected to be, on the whole, *good* girls. As Lilit talked about her past experiences from the present narrator's perspective, she declared, "I am not a quiet Armenian woman," (Interview 1, July 3, 2012). Although she drew a contrast between herself and other, quieter women from her culture, she nevertheless conveyed the idea that she was still enacting her expected *good girl* gender role (Butler, 1990; Sunderland, 2006). She adhered to her culture's expectations for her to marry; although the setting of Las Vegas was nontraditional, she was, nonetheless, married at the age of 19, and within days of her arrival in the United States, lest there be doubts about her

virginity. While she has been able to exercise more autonomy in the raising of her children than would be allowed if she lived in the vicinity of her in-laws, she has still gladly accepted the role of caregiver to her two sons, and she further accepts the household duties that she is expected to attend to, citing her own pride in having a clean home and in knowing how to cook a variety of traditional Armenian dishes. Although, in her thirties, she is starting her undergraduate education in America at an age that would be unheard of in Armenia, she has nevertheless vowed not to let her education interfere with her responsibilities at home, choosing to schedule her classes around her sons' school day and at times opting for online classes so that she can work from home, a place where she finds multiple levels of comfort. In her quest to still be a *good girl* while also exercising independence in some of her decisions, her story mirrors that of Menard-Warwick's (2007) participant Laura, whose "hybrid gender identity… was traditionally virtuous but at the same time critical and progressive" (p. 287).

Compared to Lilit, Anna's and Mazar's narratives were respectively more traditional and defiant with regard to the ways they have enacted their gender roles. Anna regularly defers to her husband, accepting that he is the "head" of the home while she is the "neck" (Anna, Interview 7, August 21, 2012); although this allows her to accept a minor position of strength when it comes to household decisions, she referred throughout her interviews to her meekness and was overall quite wary of ascribing importance to her having "power to socialize children, to run the house, and to be the power behind the throne" (Weedon, 1997, pp. 18-19). On the other hand, Mazar's story featured a number of instances of how, in her adult life after Armenian independence, she managed to thwart some of the gendered expectations of her culture by getting divorced and by having financial independence and mobility prior to settling down with her second husband in America. As a result, Lilit's, Anna's, and Mazar's varied life experiences represent dynamic and

shifting places along the spectrum between acceptance and rejection of traditional female roles in Armenian culture.

Literacy practices from childhood to adulthood. The participants' situated meanings of *literacy* spoke to how they viewed literacy as a means of negotiating language-as-print through writing and reading. What is even more interesting is to understand the participants' literacy practices over time, and to see how they have used their literacies throughout their lives as mechanisms for accomplishing other context-specific activities (Barton & Hamilton, 1999), such as child-rearing, asserting new identities in new settings, and gaining and expressing knowledge. More specifically, the participants' adult uses of literacy can be seen as "less a set of acquired skills and more an activity that affords the acquisition and negotiation of new ways of thinking and acting in the world. Literacy is learning to become competent member of a community" (Baquedano-Lopez, 2004, p. 246). The participants' language and literacy histories further provide evidence of how "[l]iteracy practices change and [how] new ones are … acquired through processes of informal learning and sense making as well as formal education and training" (Barton & Hamilton,1999, p. 13).

Two of the participants' narratives show a range of degrees to which their pre-school lives were inculcated with literacy, from the near absence of print in Anna's early surroundings in Artsvashen to Root's immersion in books as a child in Yerevan. Although Anna did not associate her years before school with literacy, she was exposed to oral literacy, or orality (Horowitz & Samuels, 1987; Ong, 1982), via her grandfather's storytelling, and her introduction to school literacy was preceded by instances of watching her mother, a toddler teacher, read books. Lilit and Mazar did not reference learning about literacy before they started school, but Root went into a lot of detail in that regard. For example, she discussed learning about the

physical properties of books before learning how to read the print in them, a common characteristic of emergent literacy (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998), and she also described characteristics of her print-rich home environment, a quality she associated with the fact that her parents, both physicians, were themselves avid readers. Root's experiences with family literacy (National Coalition for Literacy, 2011) also went beyond the influence of her parents, since her family structure included her extended family, like her grandparents and young uncle whose materials for English class she mentioned previewing before she went to school herself (Root, Interview 4, July 23, 2012).

The participants experienced various iterations of school literacy (Nagle, 1999), as evidenced from their earliest descriptions of the *aibenaran* ceremony to celebrate learning the alphabet; to the shared emphasis on attaining correctness in their writing, including handwriting, spelling, syntax, and punctuation; to re-learning school literacy in their different languages, e.g., Anna's university education in Russian, all of the participants' English-language education at Fernando, and Lilit's plans for university work; to revisiting aspects of their early experiences with school literacy by working with their children and grandchildren. Furthermore, they all identified English as the primary *language of school* in their homes, be it part of their American education or, for all but Mazar, part of the education of their children and grandchildren. That they were all exposed to a brand of literacy praised for its uniformity and adherence to a standard helps explain why, for example, Mazar said, "When I learn language, I want everything [to] be perfect" (Mazar, Interview 1, July 5, 2012), a desire that echoes Lippi-Green's (1997) summary observation on how people become convinced that nonstandard language is inherently flawed; as she stated, "our basic belief about language [is that] if we want to, if we try hard enough, we can acquire a perfect language, one which is clean, pure, free of variation. Language which is not

perfect does not have to be accepted" (p. 45, emphasis in original). Such self-perceived flaws in nonstandard language align with "[r]eproduction models [which] explain how students are conditioned mentally and behaviorally by the practices of schooling to serve the dominant social institutions and groups" (Canagarajah, 1999, p. 22).

Beyond their home and school literacies, the participants all further referenced yet another set of literacy practices that has been crucial in their ability to adapt to life in America, their newest home; this set of literacy practices is what Snyder (2009) referred to as "core digital literacy practices …[which] include Internet searching, hypertextual navigation, content evaluation, and knowledge assembly" (p. 143). Coupled with the ability to navigate the world in various forms of print — to travel in alphabets, so to speak — the participants now feel energized and empowered by their digital literacies, yet another form of linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1991) that they have acquired in the course of their travels. This is clear from Root's acknowledgement that she would need both computers and English to move forward in America, which she followed up with an Associate's degree in Computer Applications. We see it in Lilit's pride in being able to navigate the context of her undergraduate university's portal and registration materials, and in the expertise she is then able to share with her neighbor's daughter, whom she assumed would be more technologically adept than she. We can further sense that energy in Mazar's watching "millions and billions" of Russian-language films on the Internet (Mazar, Interview 4, July 26, 2012), and in Anna's exhibition of expertise in editing of her husband's website content. To varying degrees of success, all of the participants have found ways to adapt their past literacy practices in ways that help re-tool and prepare them for their present lives.

Positive positioning as language brokers. Data for this study highlight how participants were empowered in their roles as multilingual interpreters for people in the Armenian community; in some cases, like Anna's, this empowerment was especially meaningful in contrast to having felt a distinct lack of power corresponding to a lack of communicative language upon first arriving in the United States. As multicompetent (Cook, 2008) users of more than one language, they assumed various roles as language brokers in the Armenian-language community (cf. Bucholtz, 1999, and Davies, 2005, on brokers across communities of practice; Lillis & Curry, 2006, on literacy brokering in academic publishing; and Morales & Hanson, 2005, on child language brokering in bilingual contexts). Over time, as participants became members of different linguistic communities of practice (Wenger, 1998), their experiences with language brokering varied from dehumanizing, as when Anna required the use of a language broker to care adequately for sick child, to empowering, as when the participants each experienced moments during which they were able, as brokers, to provide translation services that would not have been possible without their multicompetence.

Of particular interest here are the participants' stories of language brokering with the specifically stated objective of helping others, often women, in the Armenian-speaking community. For example, Anna's interview data and co-constructed literacy history regularly reference how she saw her multilingualism as a trait that was best used as a means for helping others, including her family, women neighbors, and other members of the Armenian-speaking community; Lilit's interviews mention using her knowledge of English and Armenian, coupled with her technological literacy, as a means of assisting other Armenian-speaking women with college-related tasks, among others; and Root's narrative addresses how she used her languages at Fernando College as a means of helping other multilingual students who were more

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comfortable speaking Armenian or Russian than English. These instances foreground how the participants have used their languages to exercise a type of feminist ethics of care (Collins, 2000; Gilligan, 1982) to assist and nurture fellow Armenian immigrants.

        Exploring the continuum of privilege and marginalization. The participants' language and literacy histories further call attention to ways in which the women have assumed varying and sometimes coexisting positions along the continuum of privilege and marginalization (García Bedolla, 2007; Park, 2013) over the course of their multilingual lives. While their privileged or marginalized status corresponds with various types of capital (Bourdieu, 1991), three interconnected factors that are most salient here are the participants' inventories of economic, linguistic, and academic capital, the latter two of which can be categorized in Bourdieuvian terms as cultural capital. First, the participants came from different financial backgrounds in Armenia and Russia. Specifically, while Lilit's parents were not wealthy, their ability in the economic climate of post-independent Armenia to help Lilit through three years of her undergraduate education placed them centrally on the continuum, though more on the end of privilege than marginalization. Root, who along with her husband was gainfully employed prior to immigration, was in a similar financial situation, as was Anna, whose husband had a modest but respectable income as a small business owner in Russia. Mazar, on the other hand, having re-made herself with the powerful tool of her French language following Armenian independence, was comparatively well off at the time of her move. Regardless of where the participants were situated economically in Armenia and Russia, they all underwent marginalizing movement along the continuum upon their immigration; early in all of their journeys in America, all but Mazar received some form of state welfare assistance, assistance which Anna and Lilit were still receiving during the data collection period of this study. As Mazar stated, "When I came to

America, you can't imagine from that height, where I fell, to not zero… but below zero" (Mazar, Interview 2, July 12, 2012).

For all of the participants, transitioning away from economic marginalization meant working toward acquiring skills and knowledge — English linguistic capital, at minimum — that would assist them in finding ways to make money; contrary to, for example, Anna's and Lilit's descriptions of other stereotypical Armenian immigrant women who stayed home and raised children without venturing out to learn English, all four participants prioritized learning English, the language associated broadly with their new location (Olsen & Olsen, 2010). Despite the fact that all of the women began this path to English with multicompetence (Cook, 2008) in at least two languages, the participants framed this asset as inadequate to thrive in America, though the requirement to learn English was framed both positively and negatively. For example, Mazar referenced the Armenian adage of "The more languages you know, the more people you are," (cf. Kricorian, 2005) in describing the privilege of being in a situation that would help her become quadrilingual, but Lilit also stated, "if you don't know [the English] language, you are nothing over here" (Lilit, Interview 1, July 3, 2012), highlighting her feelings of linguistic marginalization.

During and after their courses at Fernando College, the participants described other language-related shifts on the continuum of privilege and marginalization; the feelings of confidence in English that facilitated their becoming multilingual language brokers (Morales & Hanson, 2005) further facilitated a move toward the privileged end of the spectrum. Furthermore, all of the participants had at least three years of postsecondary education before their immigration, so their experience in those settings, regardless of language background, privileged them in comparison to other new community college students unfamiliar with advanced

education. Additionally, having learned English in an American classroom, the participants also gained academic capital that prepared them to comprehend English-language course materials and subsequently enabled them to enroll in other courses outside of the ESL and English disciplines.

As a result of acquiring this linguistic and academic capital, all four participants then, at different times since 2005, became qualified to work in the Fernando College Learning Center, which is where I first met them all. Still, although this combination of capital did indeed translate into a bit of an income and thus a slight move away from economic marginalization, it would be inaccurate to state that their cultural capital, in the form of linguistic and academic capital, fully converted into economic capital. Among the four participants, only one, Root, has actively undertaken a search for a full-time job since studying and learning English in America, and it is her case in particular that highlights how her cultural capital was ultimately devalued (Messekher, 2011; Park, 2013) as her context shifted from Armenia to the United States. Multicompetent in three languages and knowledgeable in numerous facets of computer applications and office technologies, not to mention other, less tangible assets she would bring to a workplace as a woman in her fifties experienced with various work environments, Root was ultimately unable to find a permanent full-time job in America, prompting her reflection, "I'm very sad that this society, this country, they didn't accept me, my knowledge… they didn't want to use my knowledge" (Root, Interview 6, November 27, 2012). Clearly understanding the value she has with her knowledge — her various forms of privileged cultural capital — while seeing it devalued by others, especially by people in power who are the ones making hiring decisions, illustrates one example of how the participants can simultaneously occupy a position of privilege and marginalization.

Overall, the influence of the English language on the women's positioning along the continuum of privilege and marginalization is clear, at least as much from their own reference to needing English to survive in America as from my analysis of their stories. They saw themselves as marginalized without English and potentially more privileged with it, though the case of Root, who had studied English before her immigration, is an example of how that promise of privilege does not come to fruition nearly as readily as the threat of marginalization (see Lippi-Green, 1997, on threats and promises). Under marginalized conditions, they felt obligated to learn the dominant language, a situation not unlike the necessity they all had in learning Russian, the dominant language of the Soviet Empire. In a state of linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 1992), this *multilingualism as responsibility* is in direct contrast to the multilingual requirements of speakers of the dominant language. In the case of those speakers, becoming multilingual is seen not as a *responsibility*, e.g., the responsibility the participants felt to add yet another language to their already multilingual repertoires, but as an *opportunity*, something available though not required for success in converting cultural capital to other, more tangible forms. As a result, in critically analyzing English as a dominant language around the world, we can begin to see how positioning speakers of some languages to have a *responsibility* for multilingualism corresponds to the marginalized end of the continuum, while positioning speakers of dominant languages to have merely an *opportunity* for multilingualism corresponds more to the privileged end.[21]

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[21] This *continuum of multilingual responsibility and opportunity*, an interesting and relevant theoretical development emerging from this study, is a construct for which Root deserves considerable credit. When this becomes the subject of future manuscripts, she will, with her permission, be named as a co-author rather than as a pseudonymous participant. It is also important to note that while Wolfram (2013) addressed the idea of "obligation and opportunity" in sociolinguistic research (p. 756), that piece focused on researchers' opportunities and obligations to study facets of dialect communities in order to raise language awareness, not on different contexts for learning additional and/or dominant languages, which is my focus here.

The diversity within. The participants in this study have a number of qualities in common. They all share the qualities listed in the title of this dissertation; they are all multilingual Armenian immigrant women. However, these qualities, as embodied and enacted by the study participants, are neither static nor fully separable from one another, so although I may address select highlights from each, it is not possible or even desirable to distinctly "titrate out" identity elements from one another (Intersectionality, 2007, p. 229). For example, that the participants are multilingual is related to their being Armenian, having been born in Armenia during the Soviet era, a period of Russian-language dominance; and describing their woman-ness often also intersects with their Armenian-ness, especially when characterizing ways that they conform to and/or resist the patriarchal Armenian status quo. Still, despite sharing some general traits — besides all being multilingual, Armenian, immigrant women, they all speak three of the same languages, had at least three years of postsecondary education before immigration, and are married with two children — this study illustrates that, like other cultural groups, there is a great deal of within-group diversity, or *diversity within* (e.g., Kubota, 2002; Lin & Luke, 2006).

The participants' various trajectories of multilingualism, while all eventually including Armenian, Russian, and English, have taken different paths. They all studied a third language at an early age, but while Lilit and Mazar studied French, Anna studied German and Root English. Root's repertoire included Persian in her youth and Spanish in her later years, and Mazar's third language became more than a classroom language or language of residence; she used her French language in Armenia to recreate her life in her forties and then incorporated it into her adaptation to American culture when she tutored French at Fernando College. All Armenian, the participants also differ with regard to aspects of their family backgrounds, with Root's heritage "like a rainbow" (Root, Interview 5, October 30, 2012); Lilit's roots emerging from generations

in Yerevan; Anna's family history of border-crossing through Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Russia; and Mazar's family legacy from the Genocide. As immigrants, they all now live in America, but they arrived at different times, under different circumstances, and with different backgrounds of mobility and movement; and as women, beyond all being married mothers of two, they present a complexified picture of women's ways, including active resistance to the gendered expectations of their culture, satisfied acceptance of their roles as women in their culture, and other stances in between. Particularizing each woman's individuality by way of this study thus adds four polyvocal, multi-layered voices into the TESOL literature. Though this study is at an end, these voices and the ideas emerging from them can continue to have an impact on language learning, acquisition, teaching, and research, and I describe some of these implications in the next section.

Implications/Inspirations of the Study

With this study, I put a microphone to the voices of Lilit, Mazar, Root, and Anna; the interviews, follow-up meetings, and member-checking for the study are now a part of their lived experience as well as mine. While this study has implications for the larger fields of TESOL and applied linguistics, the implications for the participants are also worth noting. One of the most significant outcomes in this regard has been the participants' ability to narrate their lives, not only for me but for themselves; this act of narration, coupled with collaborating on this research, has led to the participants' authoring or inscribing themselves into existence (Menard-Warwick, 2005; Merguerian, 1995) and has facilitated the creation of a standing document of their lives thus far to which they can return and reflect upon at will.

"I was crying when I read my story. Thank you! This story made me remember my past. I really liked it. 😊 I never thought that my life could be written," (Lilit, email conversation, July 16, 2013). "Thank you. That was very interesting to read about myself through your

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understanding and comments. Thank you for such nice and lovely words about me," (Root, email conversation, August 3, 2013). "I survived [relived] my life again because of you. Thank you," (Mazar, email conversation, August 17, 2013). "When I read this chapter, I was so happy… I don't have any words to tell you how I am thankful. When I read 'my chapter', I felt that all my life passed in front of my eyes" (Anna, email conversation, September 9, 2013). Their responses to reading their narrative chapters were collectively positive, which speaks to the power that narrative research can have for narrators and to the value of a research approach that not only *does no harm* but, ideally, actually leaves some element, however small, of the research site and participants in a better state than they began. I do not mean to suggest that my work has fixed all the world's problems, or even a fraction of theirs; nevertheless, knowing that the participants are pleased with the results of our work together is one of the most satisfying personal outcomes I could have envisioned for this study.

This study also has implications for qualitative research that is conducted between participants and researchers who know each other well prior to turning living rooms and public spaces into data collection sites. These close relationships are common to narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), and the trust and confidence among all involved have been discussed in prior research (Atkinson, 1998; Balan, 2005; Craig & Huber, 2007; Shi, 2003; Soobrayan, 2003; Toma, 2000). In concert with these close relationships, the elements of mutuality, reciprocity, and collaboration typically ascribed to feminist methodologies (Christians, 2003; Denzin, 2005; Harrison, MacGibbon, & Morton, 2001) have significantly influenced the shape of this final research product. This provides strong evidence that the marriage of narrative inquiry and feminist research will continue to be a successful and intellectually fruitful one.

Implications/Inspirations for Language Learning and Acquisition

Regarding language learning and acquisition, this study has introduced a new perspective on becoming multilingual, which I, guided by Root, have named the *continuum of multilingual responsibility and opportunity*. While there is certainly more work to be done to explore this construct, it presents language scholars and teachers with a refabricated though not entirely new way to conceptualize the process of becoming multilingual, especially as that process relates to investment and identity (Norton, 2000; Norton Peirce, 1995). A more fitting conceptual metaphor here than the theoretical lens, it seems, is the prism, the smaller faces of which comprise the larger elements of big-I Investment and Identity theory; these smaller faces include, among others, this newly devised continuum of responsibility and opportunity, along with the notion of linguistic and other cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1991), language learning motivation (e.g., Crookes & Schmidt, 1991, Dornyei & Ushioda, 2011), the motivation and rationale that drive immigration, resettlement, and movement (e.g., Kim, 2009; Rystad, 1992), and a range of other context-specific issues that make up the *why*s of becoming multilingual. A few ideas for how to explore language learning through this refabricated prism are further addressed below in the section on Implications/Inspirations for Future Research.

Implications/Inspirations for Language Pedagogy

Findings from this study suggest a number of classroom approaches and projects that correspond with the ideals of a critical, humanizing language pedagogy (Bartolome, 1994; Freire, 2001; Salazar, 2013). When teachers have an understanding — or, at minimum, an awareness — of the diversity within minority groups, they can be better equipped to address the needs of their students. Likewise, understanding that students from non-dominant language groups may be marginalized by the responsibility to learn a new language is also important.

Rather than framing English language learning solely as an opportunity for advancement in American culture, a promise that is not guaranteed to be fulfilled (Lippi-Green, 1997), teachers of English as an Additional Language in America and other inner-circle countries (Kachru, 1990) will be well advised to create classrooms that acknowledge the hardship that arises from multilingualism-as-responsibility, rather than classrooms that emphasize only the potential positives arising from the multilingualism-as-opportunity stance. Such an approach can help empower students as teachers work consciously to resist linguistic imperialism (Canagarajah, 1999).

The participants' voices inspire a number of specific pedagogical projects within the critical, humanizing classroom, projects which allow students and teachers to switch roles, disrupting the normalized banking model of education (Freire, 2000) and enabling students to gain and sustain empowered positions. One such project revolves around using non-English news sources in the language classroom, stemming from how the study's participants continued to seek information in Armenian and Russian sources not only because of the language but because the content seemed more global and less focused on domestic American issues (Lilit, Interview 2, July 11, 2012). Depicting news in English — or other target languages, if this is applied to other language learning contexts —from these non-English sources in a class presentation, for example, can also provide students with avenues for brokering information from their languages into English. Especially in cases where the teacher does not speak the language of the original news source, students are inherent experts on these topics that they research and present to the class.

Another project inspiration stems from Anna's comments (Interview 7, August 21, 2012) on the changing linguistic landscape (Shohamy, Ben-Rafael, & Barni, 2010) of Armenia, which

she noticed in her last visit home. Besides the changing landscape in outer and expanding circle countries, signage in languages other than English is not uncommon in larger cities and more urban areas, so having students document these landscapes, either from the perspective of their American or other settings, or perhaps as a web-based research project for students whose linguistic landscapes are primarily exclusively English, could provide valuable student-centered insights and again give students the opportunity to be subject experts on the areas they document. Depending on the context, such a project could also present student-driven evidence that, in fact, English is not alone as the language of the United States, a finding that could help mitigate the dominating force of English while also providing students with meaningful opportunities to use it academically.

A third pedagogical inspiration relates to Anna's comments (Interview 1, July 6, 2012) about how she believed that her English language learning was hindered by the use of Armenian in the classroom; this cultural model directly conflicts with research that has illustrated how using L_1 in the L_2 classroom[22] can be a benefit rather than a hindrance (e.g., Auerbach, 1993; Cenoz & Gorter, 2013; Cook, 2001). Possibilities for using student voices to discuss benefits of the L_1 in the L_2 classroom include, among a host of other ideas, simple writing and oral discussion prompts, such as *Think of a time when you used your L_1 to help explain something about your L_2 to a fellow student*; a more in-depth undertaking could further involve fieldwork, in which students ask others about their perceptions about this topic and then present their work to the teacher and/or the class for further discussion. I know from personal experience that students will often be receptive to and appreciative of a teacher who tells them that using their L_1

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[22] It is conventional to use L_2 to mean *second language*; however, I use L_2 here to mean a language other than a student's first, even if the L_2 is in fact a student's third, fourth, fifth, etc. language.

can be helpful in their L_2 class, but a more meaningful lesson will involve students coming to these conclusions on their own and finding support for these ideas from their teachers.

Beyond these approaches and projects, more teaching implications/inspirations from this study abound, including using language and literacy histories in the classroom in a way that mirrors the participants' development of these histories through this research (e.g., Park, 2010); combining lessons in technological literacy with language learning, inspired by the participants' regular use of the web to seek multilingual information; and emphasizing the role of oral communicative competence (Hymes, 1979), even and perhaps especially in courses that focus on reading and writing rather than oral/aural dimensions of language. I look forward to implementing these ideas in my own language classroom, sharing them in TESOL and teacher training contexts, and continuing to identify and delineate even more pedagogical inspirations that originate from this study.

Implications/Inspirations for Future Research

One common quality of research — I would specify "qualitative", since that is what I have undertaken here, but that seems overly limiting — is that, in answering research questions, even more questions are generated as knowledge is constructed. Research begets research. Below are some additional lines of inquiry sparked by the current study.

- One of the most salient items on my research agenda as a result of my work in this dissertation will be to more specifically conceptualize the continuum of multilingual responsibility and opportunity as it relates to existing theory on identity and investment (Norton, 2000; Norton Peirce, 1995). I will start with data from the current study and, I hope, collaborate with Root as a co-author to outline and illustrate this interesting new

face of the Identity and Investment prism through which to view the phenomenon of becoming multilingual.

- As I was drafting the data and analysis chapters of this study, a new edited collection was published on the topic of language policies and (dis)citizenship (Ramanathan, 2013). Though not directly or deeply addressed in this dissertation — despite my devotion to my topic, I had to stop somewhere — the study data included numerous insights into the participants' perceptions about citizenship, language use, and the effect of their location and other-perceived immigrant status on their sense of self and self-worth. Synthesizing the participants' voices with concepts from Ramanathan's (2013) new scholarship will also be a lively undertaking.

- During the course of completing this dissertation, I crafted a brief analysis for the American Association for Applied Linguistics (AAAL) 2013 conference on the participants' viewpoints about English as an International Language. This presentation used the study data to start to understand how the participants viewed the global status of English as a unifying and/or diluting force. I aim to revisit that analysis with a more in-depth study that weaves together the Armenian sensibility on multilingualism — the more languages you know, the more people you are (cf. Kricorian, 2005) — with the pros and cons of English becoming a dominant language (Canagarajah, 1999; McKay, 2002; Phillipson, 1992) and a lingua franca (Jenkins, 2006; Seidlhofer, 2009) worldwide.

- Related to investigating English as a diluting or unifying force worldwide is a deeper look into how the research participants individually reconcile their positive feelings about multilingualism, which allows them to become more people, with the sense of stigma or deficit they reported having experienced in their English-dominant surroundings. This

would also provide insight into the participants' self-perceptions of their linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1991) and, as previewed in this chapter, into how their English linguistic capital in particular affects their movement along the continuum of privilege and marginalization (García Bedolla, 2007; Park, 2013).

- I started this study with the intention of doing a more in-depth critical discourse analysis of specific facets of the participants' narratives; though this study delved briefly into situated meanings (Gee, 2008), because of the sheer amount of data and the space allotted for discussion and analysis, as well as the natural path that the study took on, the focus here ended up more on shared interpretive themes than on dissecting and examining smaller stretches of discourse or "small stories" (Barkhuizen, 2011, p. 399). Nevertheless, I would still like to initiate and participate in those more detailed discussions, so I plan to revisit the study data to conduct the more specific critical discourse analyses that I had originally envisioned.

- Another interesting inquiry will be to revisit the participants to determine if and how their participation in this project has affected them personally, professionally, and/or intellectually. This stems in part from something Lilit shared with me after our initial interviews concluded; partly as a result of our work together, she decided to devote a considerable amount of her energy during her first year at the university to her own research projects that investigated the status of Armenian women in Armenia and America. Ideally, this too would be an opportunity to co-author a paper with one of the participants, an opportunity motivated by my continued commitment to the mutuality, reciprocity, and collaboration associated with feminist research (Christians, 2003; Denzin, 2005; Harrison, MacGibbon, & Morton, 2001). On a related note, that desire to

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co-author stems further from a comment that Mazar made early in our first interview; as we were working to determine her pseudonym, she declared, "I don't want to be anonymous!" (Mazar, Interview 1, July 5, 2012). Publishing papers together with her and other participants who wish to do so will help meet that need, if in fact they want their names heard along with their newly amplified voices.

- All of the participants made a connection in their narratives between their different languages and their different physical locations, suggesting some shared ideas about the need to learn new languages as they encountered new locations. Exploring this language-location link further will add to the existing literature on this topic (e.g., Olsen & Olsen, 2010).

- The participants were all born in Armenia and were living in the San Fernando Valley during the data collection period of this study. Conducting similar inquiries into the lived experiences of multilingual Armenian immigrant women of the diaspora, e.g., Iran and Lebanon globally, and Worcester, Massachusetts and Fresno, California domestically, would continue to illuminate the picture that this study has begun to paint.

- In keeping with the emphasis on praxis in critical TESOL and applied linguistics (Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999; Shin, 2006), there are numerous possible research studies that originate in the pedagogical ideas delineated in the previous section of this chapter. Although "[u]nderstandings do not just come from formal research, but also…from the classroom [,] our students and…our practices" (Goldstein, 2010, p. 76), consciously examining and analyzing the pedagogical practices described above can help draw important connections between research and practice in TESOL and applied linguistics.

Reflections on the Research Process

No roadmap or methodological template constitutes an effective design for narrative inquiry. The key to the process, in fact, is shaping the instrument - the researcher - to become a traveler, a medium for questioning, stories, possibilities, and interpretations. This requires *tuning-the-self* as researcher to particular dispositions and ways of working that keep a degree of flexibility when articulating research agendas. (Schaafsma & Vinz, 2011, p. 69)

Although I originally envisioned this endeavor as one that would rely heavily on written artifacts as well as interview data from the participants, that is not how the study materialized; this type of development is common to qualitative research, such that planning to accommodate shifts in the research design should realistically be part of the design itself. The women were happy to share their time in conversations with me, but I got the sense that the writing tasks were more like homework and less like a collaborative conversation, so I quickly adjusted my goals for the data collection and focused intently on our individual meetings. This further aligned with the aims of feminist communitarian ethics (Christians, 2002; Denzin, 1997) in that the participants' needs and preferences were prioritized.

In Chapter Two, I addressed some of the benefits that writers of language and literacy histories experience. Although the participants were not exactly the writers here, they were narrators with a collaborative scribe, and they remarked at times on some of those benefits identified earlier in the dissertation. For example, narrating her life in her third language, Anna came to realize that her English did not have to be a source of insecurity but rather one of pride, which speaks to the research process helping participants to come to have an increased sense of language proficiency (e.g., Park 2010; Simpson, 2011). Given the space to reflect on her abilities

and accomplishments in getting into a university and preparing to transfer, Lilit developed an increased sense of academic confidence (Park, 2011). Additionally, delineating the similarities and differences between how they acquired Armenian and Russian and how they later learned English, among other languages, provided the participants a greater understanding of their own learning processes (Smith, 2004). Though not all of the women were equally keen on taking up the feminist mantle, they have all had their voices heard, voices which will be amplified and will echo as ideas gathered from this study are disseminated as publications and presentations.

Another benefit that has been attributed to narrative and feminist research in general, and to the construction of individuals' language and literacy histories in particular, is the transformative potential that that process can have on the participants. These last chapters devoted to the study data have illustrated some of the ways that the act of telling their stories has helped provide the women with agency and empowerment, but of course the larger picture is more complex than that; in telling their stories, the women have also been reminded of times when they were disempowered, especially in cases when their cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1991) has been devalued and when they have been in situations where, despite their multilingualism, they have felt linguistically insecure. It is leading my participants to tread through these more precarious memories that has made me most cautious and wary throughout this research process. Conducting research with people I know well has helped us grow closer as friends and confidantes, but I cannot deny the feeling that I have still not done enough for them, and that somehow, despite my efforts to the contrary, I have nevertheless enlarged the chasm between researcher and researched. After all, I now know so much about them, but the nature of our interviews did not lead me to share nearly as much detail about my life as their did about theirs. I am privileged to have gained so much insight into the people they are and what has made them

that way, and I can only hope that by increasing my privilege in that respect, I have not further marginalized or objectified them.

I realized early in the data write-up that this process was also having a transformative effect on me, and that the writing, discussion, and analysis of each narrative was also changing how I looked at each subsequent narrative, analytical thread, or theoretical construct. I wrote the narrative chapters in the order that they appear here, but I was a different writer when I began Lilit's narrative in Chapter Four compared to who I was when I began Mazar's, Root's, and Anna's chapters. I began Lilit's chapter with the sense that only she and I were in my head as her story developed; though that "I" involved various concepts from the literature swirling about, it still felt like a different "I" than when I started Mazar's chapter. Rather than just Mazar and "I" being in my head as I wrote Mazar's chapter — just the two of us, as it felt with Lilit — other influences were present in the writing of Mazar's chapter, most especially including Lilit and my advisor, Dr. Park. At first, these influences seemed corruptive, as though I was somehow not devoting as much attention to Mazar as I had to Lilit, since Mazar's chapter involved more than just the two of us. However, as I embarked on the subsequent narrative chapters, I realized that, in fact, it *was* just Lilit and I, Mazar and I, Root and I, and Anna and I during these writing processes; what had changed with each chapter was the "I". Writing Lilit's chapter and discussing it with Dr. Park changed the writer and the researcher I was, which affected the "I" in the "Mazar and I" dyad; a similar transformation occurred as I discussed Mazar's chapter, so that the "I" in the "Root and I" dyad was also different; by the time I wrote Anna's chapter, the "I" had thus undergone numerous transformations with each previous chapter and discussion. Rather than a corruptive influence, then, the writing was positive and transformative for me as the researcher. For what it's worth, this also means that had I constructed the individual stories in a

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different order, each subsequent story would have been flavored by the "I" that I had become as a result of that writing. There is no way around that, as the transformations that occurred in me as a result of the writing were no more predictable than, for instance, the resulting image I might see on a kaleidoscope when holding it up to my eye after a certain number of shakes or twists or turns. This process, the shakes and twists and turns of it, have shaped me as a writer, and I am a different person as a result. I feel like I am a better one. I hope I am.

Conclusion

This dissertation began with an overview of the study in Chapter One, followed by a review of the literature in Chapter Two. That literature review introduced and explicated various relevant concepts and constructs from applied linguistics and also outlined some important historical, cultural, and scholarly insights into Armenian studies and narrative research. Chapter Three outlined the methodology for the study, and the remaining chapters described the results of that methodology in action; Chapters Four through Seven presented the language and literacy histories of the participants, answering the study's first research question, and Chapter Eight answered the study's second research question by outlining the major situated meanings, interpretive themes, implications, and reflections that emerged from the study.

So here we are, it seems, at the end of this road, the road on which I have *traveled in alphabets* with the participants through their lives in multiple languages. Despite this being a conclusion, in some ways it feels more like a number of beginnings; just as the door is closing on this specific genre-bound document, so many doors are opening, some loudly flying open and inviting me to walk through — this would especially describe the study's implications for teaching and research, which I am eager to continue exploring — and some, like the doors to a new career trajectory, creaking open slowly yet hopefully. I am reminded here of the opening

sequence for the *Get Smart* television series, which featured an image of a door opening and then closing, and where each door that opened led to yet another, and another. There are of course many paths that people take on their journey toward *getting smart,* and on one of those paths, finishing a PhD is understood as a pinnacle. Still, despite the sense of closure that the end of a dissertation brings, I look forward to walking through more of those new doors, and seeing what other doors materialize in the process.

Perhaps one of the main reasons that this does not feel like an end for me is explainable by the narrative methodology and my ongoing, now strengthened, friendships with the participants; in a year, five years, ten years, the participants' projections or aspirations for the future may then be part of their past stories, or at least a part of the dreams they will recall having had between the summers of 2012 and 2013. The participants' narratives have illustrated a variety of ways in which the women and their experiences are different, but one experience that they now all share in their updated pasts is the experience of working with me on this dissertation. I am overjoyed and inexpressibly grateful to count that in my past experience now as well.

AFTERWORD

SNAPSHOTS OF THE WOMEN'S LIVES SINCE THE INTERVIEWS

Lilit had a successful first year of studying at an American university. She completed two full-time semesters in the 2012-2013 academic year, including a course on "The Armenian Woman" in which required reading included two of the books published by the Armenian International Women's Association that were cited in Chapter Two of this study. She continues to work at the Fernando College Learning Center as a multilingual tutor of numerous courses in Accounting and Child Development, and she plans to graduate with her Bachelor's degree in Armenian Studies by the end of 2014.

Mazar is continuing to explore her world through the Internet and to maintain her languages through regular contact with her multilingual groups of friends, including a weekly *Salon Littéraire* with her former French professor and other *francophone* students at Fernando College. After our interviews, she embarked on an Armenian- and French-language project for which she is serving as the main translator of the story of a family of Genocide survivors. As part of that project, she will be traveling to France and possibly Armenia in early 2014, where she can revisit the numerous sites where she once lived and worked.

Root returned to Fernando College after our interviews in a full-time temporary position as a Computer Lab supervisor. That position gave her an opportunity to utilize her languages and computer knowledge and to once again share her cultural capital with the students at Fernando. After that position ended, she resumed her caretaking duties as a *tatik*, or grandma, and she has continued to serve as a computer expert and multilingual resource for her children and grandchildren. When the weather cooperates, she likes to walk to Fernando College to visit the Learning Center and the computer lab where she has played such vital roles.

Anna is continuing her studies at Fernando College and, as part of a course that highlights practical office experience, she returned as an office assistant in the Fernando College Learning Center in the Fall of 2013. She and her husband became United States citizens in early 2013, so now she looks forward to inviting her parents to visit her in America. She plans to graduate with her Associate's degree in Computer Applications and Office Technologies at the end of 2013, at which time she will have her Russian law degree evaluated and then, she hopes, be able to embark on a career that combines her languages and her fields of expertise.

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Appendix A: Informed Consent Form

Indiana University of Pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

Leonard Hall, Room 110   P: (724) 357-2261
421 North Walk   F: (724) 357-2265
Indiana, PA 15705-1015

<u>Informed Consent Form for Participants</u>

You are invited to participate in this research study. The following information is provided in order to help you make an informed decision about whether or not to participate. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to ask.

Project: Languages and Literacies, Past and Present: Narratives of Armenian Immigrant Women

Principal Investigator. Kristene K. McClure, doctoral candidate in English Composition & TESOL, Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP).

Co-investigator: Dr. Gloria Park, Assistant Professor of English, IUP.

The purpose of this study is to add to the literature on the Armenian diaspora in the United States (Southern California in particular), women's issues within that diaspora, and, most importantly, the types of multilingual experiences with language and literacy that you, the participants, have had throughout your lives. It is hoped that this work will thus add understanding to the more general phenomenon of being multilingual and multiliterate, and how multiple-language literacy can be achieved.

Participation in this study will require, in order, (1) completion of a short written account of your acquisition of multiple languages and literacies; (2) up to a maximum of ten hours of audio-recorded individual interviews, to take place over a period of ten weeks; (3) brief daily or weekly

journal entries covering the span of approximately ten weeks; and (4) two focus group meetings that will include you, me, and the other study participants (up to a total of five women in the group, including the researcher).

The written documents that you produce, the digital recordings of our individual and focus group interviews, and the transcripts that will be produced from the interview recordings will be accessible only by me, and not shared with anyone else. If you would like, you will have access to your own documents (your written accounts, interview recordings and transcripts, and reflective journals) as well as the recordings and transcripts of the focus group meetings. In the study write-up, no real names will be used; I will use a pseudonym provided by you, or I will create one for you.

There is minimal risk involved in participating in this study. Anything you tell me will be completely confidential, and no one's real name will be used. During the two focus group interviews, I will ask that all participants sign confidentiality agreements, to ensure that our conversations remain private. At any time, you may withdraw from this study, either by (1) telling me to turn off the recorder (or turning it off yourself), at which point we will end the interview session, and all information you have provided, including written documents, will be destroyed, or (2) contacting either investigator (contact information listed below) and informing her that you wish to be removed from the study, at which point, again, all information you have provided or that has been generated as a result of your participation will be destroyed. While the risk is minimal, the potential benefits to you include the opportunity to tell your individual story and have it heard/read by the readership of the written product(s) of the study. While your confidentiality and identity will not be compromised, you have a chance to share your reflections with a wider audience, and to participate in the scholarly generation of

knowledge about creating and living in a multilingual, multiliterate society. It is further hoped that being immersed in a research act centered on your own language and literacy history may lead to individual introspection and reflection, an element that can potentially lead to critical development of your agency and affirmation of your valuable multilingual, multiliterate status in a predominantly monolingual American setting.

Again, anything you say or write will be confidential, and your real name will never be used in the study. No one else, other than people you inform, will be made aware of your involvement in this work. We need honesty and depth in this study, and to get it, you will need to know that anything you say will remain private. Also, you will be free at any time to leave the study if you no longer want to participate, at which time I will remove you from the study, and any data we have collected from you will be destroyed. Your decision will not result in any loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled; most importantly, it will not adversely affect my relationship with you.

The information obtained in the study will appear in my dissertation, and may be published in scholarly journals or presented at scholarly meetings. Your identity will be kept strictly confidential, unless you wish to divulge your identity by participating with me in scholarly presentations of this work.

Please contact me with any further questions. I sincerely hope you decide to take part in the study. If you do, you will help the institution sponsoring this research, along with me, the principal investigator. Add to that the contribution you are making to the literature on the Armenian immigrant experience, and the life of the multilingual, multiliterate Armenian woman in America, and I hope the value of your participation is clear. My goal as the investigator is to help make sure your voices are heard.

Principal Investigator:

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VOLUNTARY CONSENT FORM:

I have read and understand the information on the form and I consent to volunteer to participate in this study. I understand that my responses are completely confidential and that I have the right to withdraw at any time. I have received an unsigned copy of this informed Consent Form to keep in my possession. I understand and agree to the conditions of this study as described.

Name (PLEASE PRINT):

Signature:

Date:

Phone number, email, or location where you can be reached:

Best days and times to reach you:

I certify that I have explained to the above individual the nature and purpose, the potential benefits, and possible risks associated with participating in this research study, have answered any questions that have been raised, and have witnessed the above signature.

_____

Principal Investigator's Signature   Date

Appendix B: Initial Writing Prompt for Participant's Language and Literacy History

Dear Participant,

We will be meeting for our first interview for this study in approximately two weeks (finally! ☺). During the next two weeks, please think about and begin working on the following writing prompt. Please do not view this as something that will be *judged* or *evaluated*. This is a way for you to begin to tell your story. Here is the writing prompt:

Think about the different languages that you speak, read, and write. *In the language(s) of your choice*, please write down some ideas that you think are important with regard to your use of these different languages. You know I only read English, so you will of course have the opportunity to translate your writing so that I can understand it. There is no minimum or maximum length for this, but if you think more specific guidelines would be helpful, I am happy to provide them. I assure you that I am interested in what *you* have to say, so there are no wrong answers to any of these questions! Some questions to consider are:

- What languages do you speak? What languages do you read? What languages do you write?

- When did you learn to speak, read, and write each language?

- Where, and under what conditions, did you learn to read and write your languages? Were you at home? Were you at school? Why did you start to use your second, third, or fourth languages?

- When you think about your different languages, which one(s) do you associate most with your childhood? Your current family situation? Your past experiences with school? Your current daily experiences with school, work, and community life?

- Thinking about your daily life now, when, where, and why do you use (speak, read, or write) each of your languages?

- Which of your languages do you feel is most *you*?

- Where did you live when your children were growing up? Did you speak multiple languages to them? Why or why not?

- Did you study English before you came to the United States? If so, how do you think that prepared you for using English in school, work, and in your daily life activities?

- Do you speak languages in addition to English in your classes? If so, why and with whom? If not, why not?

The above questions are only guidelines. Please do not feel like you must answer each and every question in a tremendous amount of detail (or even *any* question, if you have different ideas that you would like to talk about related to your life in many languages). Just use this as a way to get started with compiling your own *language and literacy history*.

I look forward to sitting down to talk about this with you soon.

Appendix C: Ideas for Questions to Prompt Stories During Interviews

Examples of questions about current language use, choice, proficiency, and attitudes:[23]

1. What language(s) do you currently speak with your family members?

2. What language(s) do you speak with your friends?

3. What language(s) do you speak at work?

4. If you read newspapers or news websites, what language(s) are those in?

5. Do you watch television channels or listen to radio shows that air programming in a language other than English? If so, which ones?

6. How would you rate your language proficiency in written and oral comprehension? How would you rate your language proficiency in written and oral production? (If this question comes up, participants will be provided with rating rubric.)

7. Do you think there are different cultural values attached to using your different languages? Explain.

8. What language do you most associate with yourself? Which of your languages is most *you*?

Examples of questions about first language:[24]

1. How would you describe the education and literate activities (reading and/or writing) of current and preceding generations of your family?

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[23] Questions 1-6 in this section are adapted from Codo, 2008. Question 7 is adapted from Shi, 2003. Question 8 is adapted from Wildsmith-Cromarty, 2009.

[24] Questions 1-6 in this section are adapted from Belcher & Connor, 2001. Question 7 is adapted from Burck, 2005. Question 8 is adapted from Tappe, 2009. Question 9 is adapted from Scott, 1997.

2. What are your most vivid memories of the role that written language (i.e. your L1) played in your home and family's social, cultural, occupational, or religious practices as you were growing up?

3. What role(s) do you remember written language (again, your L1) playing in your relationships with peers as you were growing up?

4. What kinds of L1 reading and writing did you do as a child in and out of school?

5. What kinds of L1 reading and writing do you do as part of your present everyday activities?

6. Do you feel that L1 literacy has played a role, minor or major, in shaping your identity?

7. Do you speak your first language with your children? If not, what language? Do your children speak to you in your first language? If not, what language?

8. When you were acquiring your first language(s), do you remember hearing or noticing different dialects or varieties (e.g., Eastern vs. Western Armenian)?

9. What is your earliest memory of writing in your first language?

Examples of questions about additional languages:[25]

1. Did you voluntarily choose to learn your second language? Your third or fourth language? Or were your additional languages somehow imposed on you? What were your initial feelings about being a learner of this particular language?

2. When did you begin reading and writing in your additional languages? What types of texts did you like to read and write? Why?

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[25] Questions 1-6 in this section are adapted from Belcher & Connor, 2001. Question 7 is adapted from Scribner & Cole, 1981. Question 8 is adapted from Burck, 2005. Question 9 is adapted from Tonkin, 2009. Question 10 is adapted from Tappe, 2009. Question 11 is adapted from Popovic, 2009. Question 12 is adapted from Kowalski, 2009.

3. How did you feel initially about your writing ability in your additional languages? Did these feelings differ significantly from your feelings about yourself as a reader in your additional languages?

4. Do you remember your progress as reader/writer of your additional languages in terms of definable stages, or has your progress been steady and continual, with no memorably different phases (or somewhere in between)?

5. How would you describe your self-confidence levels as an reader and writer in your additional languages?

6. Does reading play a major role when you write in your additional languages? Do you see your reading as an important resource for your writing? What effect, if any, do you feel writing in your additional languages has had on your reading in your additional languages?

7. Do you remember anything about learning your second script? Third script? Explain For example, at what age did you begin using these scripts? Did you learn them at home? If so, with a family member? Did you learn them at school?

8. Has your ease with using your additional languages changed over time?

9. Do you ever find yourself evaluating yourself against so-called "native English speakers"? If so, what has been the result?

10. Do you think that to learn a new language, it is helpful to be able to talk about it like many teachers talk about it (metalinguistic awareness)? What has been your personal experience with this?

11. How do you think your different languages have influenced each other, either in your learning of additional languages, or in your usage of them outside of a learning context?

12. Do you think that learning additional languages has helped you develop a deeper understanding of your first language?

Examples of questions about life memories, particularly related to schooling and education, as well as literacy:[26]

1. What is your first memory of attending school?

2. What do you remember most about elementary school?

3. What are your best memories of school?

4. How far did you go/have you gone/are you going with your formal education?

5. What do you remember most about your education in your home country?

6. What is your view of the role of education in a person's life? What about the role of literacy?

7. Which language(s) were you/have you been educated in?

Examples of additional questions about emotional expression:[27]

1. When you get angry (if you get angry ☺), what language do you find yourself using? What language do you curse in?

2. What language do you think you use most to express different emotions (happiness, sadness, etc)? Whatever the emotion, have you ever spoken in a language other than the one you think in? If so, explain.

3. What language(s) do you dream in? What language do you use to talk to yourself, think, write, pray (if you pray)?

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[26] Questions 1-in this section are adapted from Atkinson, 1998. Question 7 is adapted from Burck, 2005.

[27] Questions 1-5 in this section are adapted from Burck, 2005. Question 6 is adapted from Popovic, 2009.

4. Would you say there are feelings you have in one language but not in another?

5. Can you tell jokes in your additional languages? Have you tried translating jokes from your first language to an additional language? What has been the result?

6. Are you more playful or relaxed in any particular language?

Examples of questions about language attrition:[28]

1. What, if any, is your experience with language loss?

2. If you have ever felt like you are losing or have lost any of your languages, do you think that applies more to reading and writing, or to listening and speaking?

3. If you have experienced a sense of language loss, how does that relate to retaining or losing your home culture?

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[28] Questions 1-2 in this section are adapted from Freedman, 2009. Question 3 is adapted from Soliday, 1994.

Appendix D: Copy of Initial IUP IRB Approval

Indiana University of Pennsylvania
www.iup.edu

Institutional Review Board for the
Protection of Human Subjects
School of Graduate Studies and Research
Stright Hall, Room 113
210 South Tenth Street
Indiana, Pennsylvania 15705-1048

P 724-357-7730
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April 21, 2011

Kristene McClure
5237 Cahuenga Blvd. #1
North Hollywood, CA 91601

Dear Ms. McClure:

Your proposed research project, "Exploring Armenian Immigrant Women's Narratives of Multiple Literacies and Languages," (Log No. 11-057) has been reviewed by the IRB and is approved as an expedited review for the period of April 20, 2011 to April 20, 2012.

It is also important for you to note that IUP adheres strictly to Federal Policy that requires you to notify the IRB promptly regarding:

1. any additions or changes in procedures you might wish for your study (additions or changes must be approved by the IRB before they are implemented),
2. any events that affect the safety or well-being of subjects, and
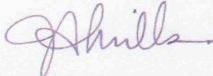3. any modifications of your study or other responses that are necessitated by any events reported in (2).

Should you need to continue your research beyond April 20, 2012 you will need to file additional information for continuing review. Please contact the IRB office at (724) 357-7730 or come to Room 113, Stright Hall for further information.

Although your human subjects review process is complete, the School of Graduate Studies and Research requires submission and approval of a Research Topic Approval Form (RTAF) before you can begin your research. If you have not yet submitted your RTAF, the form can be found at http://www.iup.edu/page.aspx?id=91683 .

This letter indicates the IRB's approval of your protocol. IRB approval does not supersede or obviate compliance with any other University policies, including, but not limited to, policies regarding program enrollment, topic approval, and conduct of university-affiliated activities.

I wish you success as you pursue this important endeavor.

Sincerely,

John A. Mills, Ph.D., ABPP
Chairperson, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
Professor of Psychology

JAM:jeb

xc: Dr. Gloria Park, Dissertation Advisor
Ms. Beverly Obitz, Thesis and Dissertation Secretary

Appendix E: Sample Template for Daily Language and Literacy Log

Name: Day: Date:

	Where were you? Were other people involved?	Which language(s) did you use?	What did you do/read/write?
Morning			
Afternoon			
Evening			

Reflections, Memories, Other Ideas:

Adapted from Jones, Martin-Jones, & Bhatt, 2000.

Appendix F: Sample Template for Weekly Language and Literacy Log

Name: _____   Week: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10   Page 1

	Where were you? Were other people involved?	Which language(s) did you use?	What did you do/read/write?
Monday			
Daily Reflections, Memories, Other Ideas:			
Tuesday			
Daily Reflections, Memories, Other Ideas:			
Wednesday			
Daily Reflections, Memories, Other Ideas:			
Thursday			
Daily Reflections, Memories, Other Ideas:			

	Where were you? Were other people involved?	Which language(s) did you use?	What did you do/read/write?
Friday			
Daily Reflections, Memories, Other Ideas:			
Saturday			
Daily Reflections, Memories, Other Ideas:			
Sunday			
Daily Reflections, Memories, Other Ideas:			

Weekly reflections, stories, or other thoughts on your languages and literacies:

Adapted from Jones, Martin-Jones, & Bhatt, 2000.

Appendix G: Sample Analytical Memo

Anna: Interview 7, 8/21/12
Duration of this Interview: 1h 16m
Transcript: 19 pages, 8098 words
Total Duration of All Interviews: 10h 32 m

Narrative Events for Timeline

- ❖ Last visit to Armenia: 2007
- ❖ During that trip: "we went to our friend's home and their brother's boy- young, ten years old boy came from Yerevan, and he speaks English very good, and I proud, I say oh my god, and he talk with my kids in English. Very good, I said good job, I'm proud"
- ❖ She still feels a lot of insecurity about understanding English on the phone (p. 4)
- ❖ Her children are starting Armenian classes in September
- ❖ Her emotional language is sometimes Russian (not just Armenian) (p. 8): "like today in the morning I was so sad, and in the car, again, I think loudly in Russian."
- ❖ P. 8: This week her husband wrote her a note in Russian, and she responded in English (but both in Latin script): "Yeah, I wrote- I wrote English. He wrote something about M--, a Russian girl, our college, and I said- he said, did you call M--? In Russian. And I answered, who's M--? It's English (laughs). I don't know why. Why that? Why - maybe because my alphabet is- no, it's again he- alphabet is English but he wrote Russian name. That- [K: He wrote it in English (letters)-] English letters, Russian words. Yeah. Yeah. It's all- it's happen very often, all the time."
- ❖ After I asked her to reflect on her experience taking part in this research, she started talking about what her future might be like: "Maybe tomorrow gonna happen something new and gonna change, oh, something- maybe I'm gonna got some good job, and got a lots of money, or I'm gonna move, I don't know."
- ❖ Reflecting on her knowledge of English, which she was reassured of during this research process, Anna remember a past story about others' perceptions of her English proficiency: "Just I remember about again languages, first time after 2 years when we came from Russia, and I- when I again in GAIN program, not in college again, the really GAIN, they have job fair and they apply- we went to interview, and the woman who did interview, she was very very good, nice person. And I - in that time my English was not so good, but I - again I can talk, I can say some- not so good, and they hire me. And I worked in the court. They hire me, and again one- just I remember just that, I fill out all paper, and I sent my ch- child worker, childcare worker, and then he called to that- that woman, I forgot her name, and he said, I can't believe that Anna is gonna work in the court because she doesn't know English. And the woman, she said, do you know she doesn't know English? You are so wrong! Because Anna knows English very well. And you think it's everything- she lying or something, doing- no. She can work in the court. And if I fill out the paper, I know that I did right everything because she knows Eng- because she can speak English. And better than you! (Laughs). Yeah, I was so proud, I said oh. One- what I wanna say- even they don't want to give us chance, that we can move high and high, why? If you have that job, in childcare worker… why I couldn't work? Maybe one day I can work again in the childcare. Yeah. How it's gonna have a job if she doesn't know English, she can't speak. She can't speak. Imagine, she can't speak. Yeah. That's why I'm powerful and strong now. I can say, yes, I know English, I

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can- maybe I'm doing mistakes, I'm- some words are not correct, but I can understand people, explain something to them, and they can understand me."

❖ Reflecting on empowering experiences, she describes how she usually is (shy and not confident) compared to an encounter she had recently, in which she asserted power with her husband since she understood her intellect: "You know, I think this is my mistakes because when I'm going to somewhere and I have to do something, I'm getting- I want- I always rushing. Hurry, I always. Then I'm doing that, then when I think, I think I did not correct. I have to do- oh I- I forgot did that, I forgot. And I try to again think about it. I'm finding, maybe it's not mistake, but I'm try to always find something that I did wrong. I don't know why. I always said, why I have to always be wrong? I don't know, maybe I'm- I have to trust myself too much (she means more/a lot) and I said, you did everything always wrong. Then I'm gonna have some headache. I'm- I'm thinking too much. And little something, little something happened, I'm gonna be big problem, yeah. But this- but I know people, they say, okay. It's okay, it's okay. It's good when they say, but why I did- I can't make a big problem from a little thing, I don't know. And I always think that I'm doing wrong and I did wrong, I have to go back, I will check. I did another step. Like today my husband said, maybe you did something wrong (because they had some problems with their welfare paperwork and income reporting, and she had just come from a meeting with her welfare worker this morning that was upsetting because their welfare may be reduced even though her husband's business is still losing money). I said no, no, I'm- no! What I'm gonna be wrong! I said everything's right, everything" (but) "It's not- it's not have any- anything with languages, it's just my personality. Yeah."

❖ She always feels Armenian, even when speaking Russian (p. 12)

❖ Reflecting on reaching goals since she arrived in the US and on goals and plans for the future (such as citizenship): "sometime I'm think maybe I'm the same- in the same line like the other people who are already knew English before than I, I reach them. Maybe accent or something else (laughs), you understand. But I reach them. I can have my flag. I finish! [K: What does that mean, I can have my flag?] Already I want- I know English, and the- [K: The victory flag.] Yeah, victory- yeah. I don't have right now flag because I'm not a citizen. I'm gonna be cit- I'm gonna be citizen and say, oh, now I'm- I have flag. This is my all- it was very hard job, Kristie. It was very hard to start learn something and go, move- move, it's hard. Hard but you- people can reach that. That goal. This is- was my first goal, yeah- it was fast. It's fast- it's take four- three- five years."

❖ She has reached the first goal she set for herself upon coming to America: "I reach my first goal. When I came America, when people ask, teacher asking- when- write some essay, get- what was- what is your first goal? I always wrote it was- it was I want to first im- learn English, then blah blah, find a job (sound effect like so on and so forth). First I can say I reach my goal. First goal. This is this, just- just first one."

❖ Citizenship plans from the time of this interview: November, apply; December, meet 5 year residency requirement; citizenship by February or March (p. 15)

❖ When she went back to Russia in December, she did not feel more American, and nobody treated her that way (contrast with Lilit's reflections): "This is good question. No, nobody said me that (I was becoming like Americans). Because in Russia, I still- I still like- when I been five years ago in Russia, and I thought that I've never been in America, you know. I forgot about it, I'm living- I'm in Russia, I use all my Russian everything, like I have to use there. Because I'm in Russia, why I have to talk with people English- no. I try to be Russian

there. When I here, I forget about Russian things and I'm Americ- English- everything English. When I go back to Armenia, I'm gonna be again like Armenian citizen. [K: But when you went to Russia, did you feel more Russian or Armenian?] No, no, I always feel Armenian. I always feel Armenian. I'm never feel like I'm Russian, no. I'm not a- I like be there, I like Russian friend- my friends, everything, but I'm always feel like I'm Armenian. I'm never feel like Russian. I don't want to be Russian."

❖ She uses her English on a daily basis at home, especially when working with her children as they do their homework

Situated Meanings/ Cultural Models

❖ English as an international language/evidence from 2007 trip to Armenia: "When I was in Armenia because in every stores, they- was written in English. Like, gas station in English…[K: So you were surprised.] Yeah. I was surprised because every store in everywhere was written in English. Say, why, this is Armenia! [K: Was it English and Armenian?] Just English! Some of them maybe Armenian, English, but most of the- only English. And we was- we were surprised. Why English? Maybe some- somebody came from village, Armenian poor man, and he doesn't understand English, but why they write English? And it's surprise for me. I don't know why they did that, why English, and again, right now too. English is most- write English than Armenian….Yeah, that was I was- we were surprised about it. I don't know why they- maybe- maybe more international, more people from outside, they came, tourists there, but again I don't understand. It should write only Armenian. Maybe Armenian and English, yeah, it's okay, but only English, I have no idea why they did that. [K: It's weird. What about Russian? Was there any Russian?] No. Russian, never you can see any English (she means Russian)- maybe in some- maybe in- if it's embassy, Russian American embassy, something, yeah, it's- not anymore, only in Russia."

❖ You don't choose which language to use - it just happens: "Yeah, you don't choose it, it just happened. Or then in Armenian, I said, thought loudly by- with myself, I said, why, why that, why people are different, I don't know. If you said, if you- even if you are happy, you want to show your emotions, and it's- it happened like the same, you don't know which kind of- which language, because your all languages are here (points to head), they're mixed already. And you use- I mean right now I'm using in Armenian, and Russian, and English I'm using. And also it's- it's okay in my mind already mixed, when I'm thinking, maybe Russian, maybe English, maybe, yeah."

❖ More on English as a potential financial tool: "My languages can help- for example, if I'm- would like to have some job, in my resume I always put my languages. Armenian, Russian- before I wrote "a little bit English" but now a little, gone. I can- English, which is good. Which is good."

❖ Many Armenian-American children have retained their family language, but that has not happened in Russian families (*compare to Root's idea about how children's Armenian is not "perfect", as Anna says here):* "But here, then here, I saw all Armenians' kids who born here, and also if they came two years age or, yeah, they all know Armenian very perfect. They speak Armenian- I said, oh my god, good job! They didn't forget Armenian. You know, and I said… you born here and you speak Armenian perfectly! Good job. But in Russia, who born in Russia or from two years age they lived there, they don't know- they didn't- they don't know Armenian."

❖ The Armenian culture present in Los Angeles is something Anna likes (p. 7)

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❖ It is important for her children to retain their Armenian identity, primarily by retaining their Armenian language: "I don't want to that they forget Armenian. I really really don't want. I want to they speak at home only Armenian. Because this is the home. It's only Armenian. When I went to Russia in the last winter, in Armenian families, I saw how they kids, they are talking only Russian. They don't know Armenian. And also their parents, they are talking with them in Russian. I said why? You have to talk with them Armenian and keep Armenian language at home. They say, oh! They all the time- they are talking, they are going to kindergarten, they are talking with Russian kids. Okay! They are talking in kindergarten but at home, if they talking Russian, you said, no, this word is Armenian. Don't say- I don't understand Russian! Try to say it in- try. But my friend, she at home all the time talks with the kids only Armenian. And I saw only her kids, they are talking - only their Armenian in home. And one time I asked the- my friend's son, I asked Russian something, and he - he said me, Anna ask me Armenian, I don't understand Russian! (He knew Russian, but he knew it was important to speak Armenian at home) I said, good job! Good job, I proud of you, good job. I said, good job, because he- he said, I know Russian, but only in school. I- at home I want to talk only Armenian. I said good job, T--! His name T--. Yeah. But the other kids only Russian, Russian, I said, why you talking Russian at home! Say me- I don't understand Russian! Try to say this Armenian. You don't know Armenian. Okay you have to write Armenian. I understand if they mother is Russian, the father is Armenian, it's okay, I understand that thing but if mother and father, they are Armenian, why you talking at home- imagine I'm- at home I'm gonna talk every day with my kids in English."

❖ Father as king: "King. The head. Like the mother is the neck (laughs)…Yeah! And somebody always said, father is the head of the family. Mother is the neck, and the kids is like the (waves arms) arms. And they can fly- they can fly, go. [K: They can fly away eventually.] Away. And neck. But they say, many, many people understand- neck- that head is (more) important than neck, but the other people say, no, neck is important because when you move your neck (gestures by moving head back and forth, to illustrate that the neck determines the direction of the head), your head gonna move like, see. If mother say, if neck said no, head said no too (laughs). I don't know, they explain like that. But now, for- for real, this is like they say. But for real, yeah…the neck's important. When you move your head, you move your neck and your head again get- your head gonna stay like this (meaning it can't move without the neck). Automatically it goes (the head goes in the direction of the neck)…But I know many, many families, if the king, the father in family, he doesn't want to work, he doesn't want- he just want to lie and relax and mother, the [K: Has to do everything for him.] Yeah, and wife do everything. I know that families too."

❖ Knowing English is a major source of pride: "If - already when I know English, I'm very strong, powerful, like you say, and I- sometime I'm think maybe I'm the same- in the same line like the other people who are already knew English before than I, I reach them. Maybe accent or something else (laughs), you understand. But I reach them. I can have my flag. I finish!"

❖ Dispelling the idea that you are a different person in each language you know: "I think it's not express me, like other person, if I know language I'm gonna be other person, no. I- still I'm the same person. But I add in my life something new, some new language, some new responsibilities. Part of you think in my life is my English, but still I'm the same, yeah."

❖ Attaining American citizenship is the ultimate "flag" (her word) of victory (my word… but make sure it is really what she means): "Yeah, victory- yeah. I don't have right now flag

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because I'm not a citizen. I'm gonna be cit- I'm gonna be citizen and say, oh, now I'm- I have flag."

❖ Husband is in charge, in her household at least: "For me, in my house, my head and the most important thing, the- how say, the boss- is my hus- the king- is my husband. What he say is gonna be- is rule of our home. What he said. Yeah. And we- everybody, me and my kids are like, say, okay, we are listen him. Okay, because he more- how say smarter than- maybe. How it's said? He knows more everything than- yeah. [K: More knowledgeable?] Knowledgeable, yeah. Than me.

❖ America is a land of opportunity, and it is important to use those opportunities rather than waste them: "Yeah, and I'm very very happy I'm - that America, the people, everybody, help us, the p- the people who came from Armenia, Russia, they giving us good opportunities for our kids, for us. They say, okay, you don't know English, go Fernando College or go P-- College, Fernando College, okay, we are giving you that opportunities. You go, we paying your money- money. You- you- you don't need to pay. We are paying you. Go- first money, they giving you, then you have to learn English. It's very- in Armenia or in Russia, they- in other country, they never give me that chance. Never give me money and say, okay free, you can go and learn the Russian or Armenian or English. But here they said, okay, if you just- you must- you have to take the chances, give that gift come to you and use the chance, and you can be like- you can go and stay in the same line like other- like American people, like the other Armenian people they first- who first, like, they came from- and you can be- just you have to have some wishes, or you- if you want, you can do. They give you everything. Use it. Use it…This country give you- even if you want to go university, okay, if you don't have money, you can have loan, you can got loan. You can learn, you can reach your goal. They- I very- they are- appreciated this country, give us the chances"

❖ The work she does at home is not affected by her English or vice versa, and the home is her job: "I think my housework, it doesn't help me any, improving my English because it's my work, job, I'm doing- no. it doesn't help me to improve my English."

❖ More on her home being her first job: "I must to do my homework- housework because I- even I don't want, I should, I must. Because it's my responsibilities. I'm a mother, I'm a wife, I'm a house keeper, how you say. But I'm going to school, I'm improving my English skills."

❖ Not knowing English in America makes others think much less of you: "Yeah, yeah, even if you don't know English - even if you don't know English but you gonna be so educated, so kind person, so nice person, but you don't know English. They think if you don't know English, we are stupid, we are came from the moon or not. But I just came, I will learn English. I will be the same level like you. But now, now I'm this. Now I- I don't know English or something else. Please explain me and don't judge me and don't say me like, you are bad, if you get welfare you are stupid and you don't know. Everybody came from- and they needed because people don't know English, how they gonna have a job now? It's a bad time right now, economy, everything is bad. It's not- if you see the person next to you, they are nice, kind, you are feeling- you are feeling you are so good. And free, and more- [K: (Like it rubs off on you)] Yeah, yeah. But you feel like they are kind of- I don't know, they are poor, they are thinking- [K: Mean, rude-] Yeah. You- it's automatically in you"

❖ Literate communication is preferable to oral communication because you have more time to compose your thoughts: "writing is better than talking or speaking. Because you can translate

your mind and say the words, find some words, you have time to find the word and write. It's better if you have time, yeah."

❖ Armenia is a multilingual country: "I think every Armenian people, they know Russian and-Russian. I think the 90%, they know Russian. Then maybe again some of them English or Germany, French, yeah. Yeah. But Russian still second language in our country. [K: Not English… even though the signs (are in English)] Oh yeah, maybe already - when I came it was in Russian. Now maybe Ru- English is second, you're right. [K: " Based on what you just said, right?] Yeah, then Russian is third maybe, yeah. Because Russian is most- English is most useful than Russian maybe."

❖ Knowing English is a requirement in America as well as a potential source of financial power: "It's powerful because you feel, like you say, strong, yeah. You feel- I don't know, very, you can be more stronger or- why? Because you can understand. If people, they are talking each other, and they maybe- and you can understand them, you can explain something for them, something else. It's very important. It's good. It's very good. and you- now before, when I didn't know English- [K: (Urging her to tell an "I" story in addition to "you" generalizations ☺)] I- I story. Yeah. Before, when I haven't know English, I thought that people don't know English too. They, again, like me. And I never understand in English, and when people talk English on TV, I didn't know what the language this is. I said, oh, okay. And before, they use English more because they knew English, people in Armenia or Russia. I didn't know. And for me, it's- nobody understanding, nobody knows, yeah. But now I understand how people use- use English and how often and how the every single- every word when they're talking even in movie or something, they use English words. They use English words. And I- even I said- told my husband, I said, it's very good that we know English right now because it's one more good that we are here in America, that's first thing that you learn English. We learn English, it's third languages, maybe we can move again in Russia or Armenia, it's good for us, we know English already. We can find some job which is gonna be in English, use English, use English. [K: And that's financially valuable.] Yeah, yeah. That's why I say, I'm- now I feeling more stronger than before because I know English."

❖ Narrating others' stories of encountering English at the expense of the local language: "everybody- and also my sister in law, two years ago, she went to Armenia, and again she came back and said, I was so surprised, everything in English! Everything, English, I- I- she said, I forgot I'm in America or in Yerevan in Armenia. I don't know why they do that. If I was the government, I will say, only Armenian, or English- [K:Why?] Because this is Armenia. You have to- yeah, it's Armenia- because- yeah, and in the some stores, Kristie, first is English, second is Armenian. You have to first write Armenian, then English because it's the Yerevan, it's Armenia, I understand. I know many, many more people from the other countries, they come to Yerevan, visitor or something else, but write something, it's gonna be only- not only Armenian or English together, or Russian maybe. [K: But there were some things that were only English?] Yeah, yeah. Many- only English. Yeah. Gas station is petrol, petrol. Only English, not Armenian [says the word for gas] or something. Only petrol. We all the time we came from the next to the gas station, so, look, look! Petrol! Petrol! Not gas station, petrol. I remember that. Flowers. They wrote, Hasmik's Flower. Hasmik's Flower. You can write [Armenian word for flower], Armenian, then flower- why not? Yeah, I surprised. [K: When you're thinking about it, what's bad about that, or what's not good about that?] Yeah. For me it's bad because even if everywhere now people speaking English or

Russian, you never don't forgot, like, it's your home. It's Armenia, and first everything must be Armenian, then other languages. Must be Armenian. If you write something first English then Armenian, why? Many many people they don't understand English. They have to look, where is Armenian? Where is Armenian? I have to find where- which kind of restaurant, which kind of store is it. That is bad. Next is good because everybody, every people who came outside people can read and I say, oh my gosh, it is English. Okay. I agree to two languages, yeah- yeah, but please, write first Armenian, then English. Yeah. Why in Russia they didn't put any English or any Armenian words? Just Russian, that's it. If you can't understand, you speak English, you can ask somebody, please can you explain me, can you said what is it or in Armenian, you go to Russia. If Armenian people doesn't understand Russian, they can go ask somebody and say, what is it? They can explain."

❖ Knowing English well is a source of pride: "I am proud that I know English. Every little kid, they speak English in Yerevan, I- I'm very- we went to our friend's home and their brother's boy- young, ten years old boy came from Yerevan, and he speaks English very good, and I proud, I say oh my god, and he talk with my kids in English. Very good, I said good job, I'm proud."

Other Notes:

❖ I guess I haven't taken up too much of her time ☺ "Like second week! Like, yeah! It pass so fast, oh my gosh!"

❖ Mutual benefits of our research: "I'm very happy. I'm very- how you say. I like our conversation. It's very interesting, it's very, very interesting. The- our conversation. I learn more from you when you said something, when- add something, when I say and you add something. And also I learn something from- how- when I said, don't learn, I said, remember. I remember many, many memories from my past. It's very interesting, very very exciting, our conversation. I don't know. I would like to repeat again."

❖ This research helped her gain confidence in using English: "I just think that I knew English not so bad (she realizes that her English is not as bad as she thought it was ☺). When I talking, I said, oh my gosh, we can talk! I can - I can do this, I can got- yeah! And I said, I think the more- the one more thing about me, I can talk with the person and I can- and don't- can't be confused. Yeah, be free, yeah. Before, I thought I couldn't do that. It's hard. I do- did always mistakes, blah blah, like that, but now, I'm- I have already experience. This is a good, good experience for me. Very good experience for me, yeah. Yeah. And somebody can ask me, have you ever experienced, like, talk the people about your- about Armenia, about yourself, about I don't know. I said, yeah, of course!" And later, on page 12: "Now it's more, yeah, yeah. Now I'm - I don't scare of English. Now it is my relative, it's my friend, it is my, I don't know, all the time with me (laughs). I say it, all the time with me."

❖ "And thank you for this good conversation, for this good experience, this is like- means lots for me. Like, I'm very appreciate that you choose me. You can choose me, but you choose me, it's very good- I think that I'm- I feel very good, now."