

TAIWANESE IMMIGRANT PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR ADOLESCENT
CHILDREN'S ESL LEARNING AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

by

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the attitudes of recent Taiwanese immigrant parents, of relatively high socioeconomic status, toward the ESL learning of their adolescent children in one city in the Lower Mainland region of British Columbia, Canada. A qualitative, ethnographic approach was used to gather data from parents and adolescent children in eight families.

The research questions for the study were: 1) How do Taiwanese immigrant parents perceive factors that influence their children's academic achievement? 2) What are their perceptions of their children's ESL learning experience and its relation, if any, to their academic achievement? and 3) What are the children's perceptions of their ESL learning experience and its relation, if any, to their academic achievement?

The "reflective narratives" related by the parents and adolescent children shed light on the language socialization process and the social identities of both students and parents. Key emergent issues included differences in educational systems, tests and homework, pressure and discipline, and progress in ESL learning.

Parents expressed dissatisfaction with the extreme aspects of the education system in Taiwan, indicating that a prime reason for emigration to Canada was their children's education. Nonetheless, parents' remarks also revealed deep discomfort and dissatisfaction with the holistic learner-centered approaches prevalent in Canadian schools and what were perceived as overly long periods spent in ESL classes without clear external markers for achievement or criteria for advancement. As parents compared and "weighed" their children's academic experiences in Taiwan and Canada, the balance tipped toward the lock-step, test-oriented Taiwanese type of formal academic learning, featuring authoritarian roles

for teachers and parents. Parents' comments thus revealed a profound ambivalence. Students' remarks also showed them to be caught between two systems and two cultures, with divergent learning styles, and two authorities, the parent and the teacher, with differing values and expectations.

The study identifies the apparent depth of difference between the views of parents and the classroom practices of Canadian teachers concerning English as a Second Language and academic achievement and suggests a possible model for use in bridging and accommodating those differences.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

“If all Canadians were to be aware of the Chinese immigrants’ dilemmas, perhaps there would be more understanding.” (Grade 11 student, British Columbia, Canada, June 18, 1996.)

1.1 Background of the research problem

In the last ten years, there has been a major increase in Canada’s immigrant population. In British Columbia (B.C.), the number of foreign immigrants has more than tripled from 1981 to the present. According to Statistics Canada, 22.3% of B.C.’s 3.9 million residents now report their mother tongue as neither English nor French, compared to 16.6% across Canada (cited in Vancouver Sun, Dec.3, 1997). Among the new immigrants to B.C. there has been, according to the 1991 census, a 72.9% increase in immigrants from Taiwan within the five year period of 1986-1991 (Colp-Rutley, 1994).

In a growing and changing multicultural community such as this, with pluralistic beliefs and practices, (Taylor, 1994) conflicts and dilemmas centered on issues such as English as second language programs in public schools are increasingly arising. According to a school trustee, 52% or 30,754 of 59,210 students in a major metropolitan area in B.C. are ESL learners (Vancouver Sun, Dec. 3, 1997). The impact of the new immigrant English as a second language (ESL) students on the local School Board’s ESL programs and budget, as well as the administrators, teachers and support staff of metropolitan public school systems in British Columbia, has been considerable. With pressures from a number of sources, ESL departments are undergoing rapid changes, including funding cuts, adverse public opinion concerning ESL programs in public schools, increasing student numbers, problems of program accreditation, program delivery and curriculum change. In addition, the ESL recipients and families themselves have expressed increasing frustration with current ESL

programs and their educational experience. Apparent tensions and conflicts can be seen between and within groups comprised of students, parents and teachers, the constituent groups integral to the “multicultural, multilingual high school learning community” (Mohan, Early, Liang, Huxur-Beckett, Guo, & Salzberg, 1996).

Like most immigrant parents with high aspirations for their children in the new country, (Fuligni, 1997), recent Taiwanese parent immigrants came to Canada for a better life for their families. Parents, strongly influenced by traditional Chinese cultural values, have realistic concerns for the life careers of their children, which they believe can only be achieved through academic success. In other words, according to an old Chinese proverb, “wang tzu ch’eng lung”, they “aspire” for their children to become “dragons” (Lin, 1987).

Since on the average in most public schools, total integration from ESL programs into mainstream content classes takes more than two years, many new immigrant students and their parents, in particular the Taiwanese, feel that the students are in ESL programs for exasperatingly long times. It appears that the primary concern for Taiwanese parents is for their children to merge into and succeed in mainstream classrooms as quickly as possible and not through gradual integration from separate ESL classes or ESL transition classes in the school. These views are linked to issues of separate or integrated classrooms, curricula for recent immigrant students and fears that separation hinders the child’s academic achievement, thus raising the spectre of ghettoization.

As a result, there have been expressions of concern as to the school districts’ provisions for ESL students, their progress in learning ESL, and the process by which they are integrated into content classes.

1.2 Purpose of this Study

The aim of this study is to examine more closely one home-school constituent group of the “multicultural, multilingual high school learning community,” Taiwanese parents and their adolescent student children. Due to the fact that the growth in Taiwanese immigration to British Columbia is a recent phenomenon, there are very few studies of the fairly homogeneous group of recent Taiwanese immigrants belonging mostly to the “business or independent” class of immigrants. Chong, Lin, Lin & Cheng’s (1994) public health study on the adjustment of Taiwanese immigrant families in British Columbia, indicates that the chief motivation for the Taiwanese migration was reported to be their children’s education. (p.19) Chong et al. also reported in their semi-structured qualitative study that 54% of those responded to the question indicated they were well adjusted to living in Canada, and 43% noted they had had some difficulties with adjustment. (p.23) This study employs a similar demographic to that of Chong et al’s and intends to explore more deeply the schooling experiences of recent Taiwanese immigrant students through the eyes of their parents. In order to establish a broader family perspective involving the parent and the learner, this study also includes a comparison component in which the children of the parent subjects are interviewed with the same type of question guide as their parents. (On this aspect of the study, see Chapter 3, Methodology.)

Focussing on gathering meaning from the informants’ own stories, this study follows the steps of “ethnographic discovery” (Spradley, 1979, p.24) because, according to Franz Boas (1943, p.11 cited in Spradely, 1979), “if it is our serious purpose to understand the thoughts of a people the whole analysis of experience must be based upon their concepts, not ours.”

The study can be viewed in three perspectives. The first perspective is descriptive (what happened in the interviews). Parents, in response to semi-structured questions, related their experiences, and those of their children in Taiwan and Canada, together with their attitudes, their feelings, their hopes and their fears. The second perspective is an interpretive one: what meaning can we attach to the verbal acts of those parents and their children? (See Figure 1.1). This is a question both of what their words reveal about the parents and children, and their reflective processes, and the implications we can draw from their words and those processes. In other words, the second perspective attempts to interpret and establish a dynamic, a schema embracing the interactions of parents and children, their experiences, attitudes, goals, values, beliefs and their education. The third perspective is also an interpretive overlay, one that seeks parallels between parents' reflective processes and those of English as Second Language (ESL) teachers as prescribed by Richards & Lockhart (1994). (It should be stressed that the present study did not entail the gathering of data directly from ESL teachers. Sources of information relating to ESL teachers, ESL pedagogy and Canadian academic education in this study were the data collected from the Taiwanese parents and their children, and from texts of authority on ESL teaching and learning, such as Brown (1994), Nunan (1993, 1988), Richards and Lockhart (1994) and Widdowson (1993)).

Thus, emerging from the reflective thinking of the parents, expressed in their stories of their children's educational experiences, this study depicts parents' "accounts" (Harré, 1993) through the "acts" of language socialization (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986). The parents' "acts" of language socialization entail the "stream of behavior or events" in the educational experiences of their children, as related and reflected upon by the parents. These, in turn, manifest the participants' social identity relevant to the social situation (Ochs, 1993), (figure 1.2). In this perspective, the study is contextualized within a synthesized full-rounded home-

FIGURE 1.1

Reflective Thinking and Language Socialization Frameworks

Shieffelin & Ochs (1986), Ochs (1993)

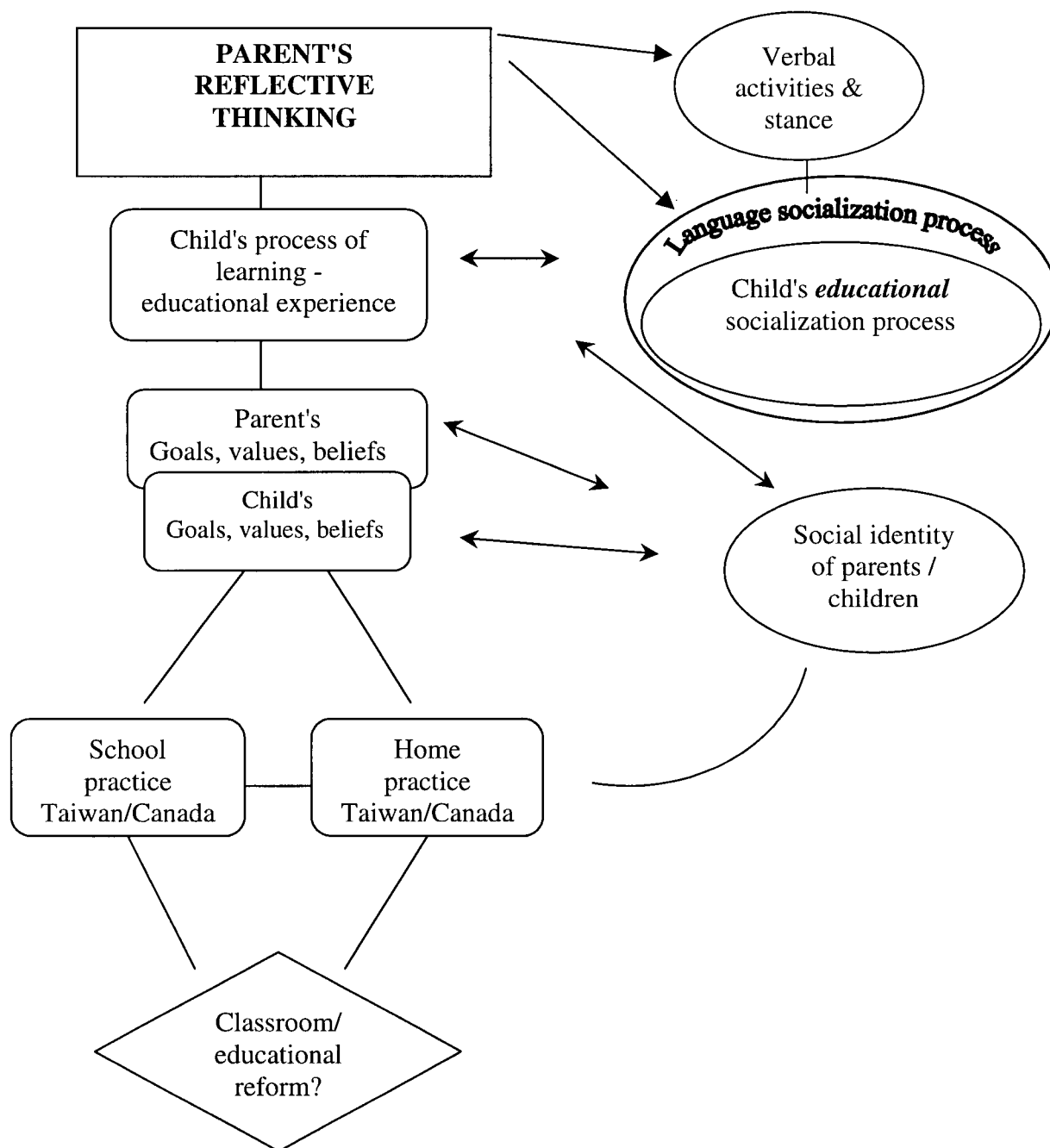
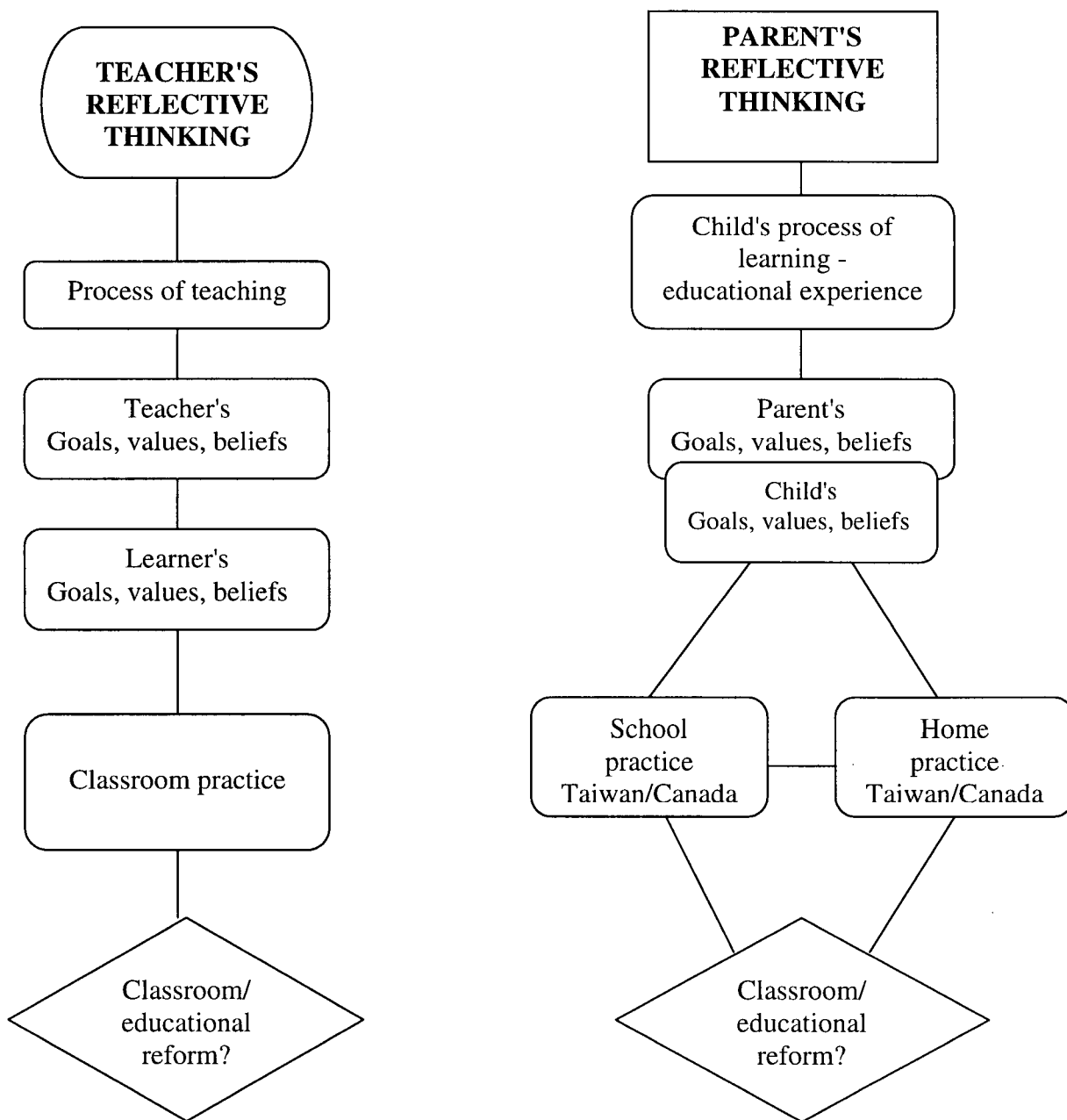


FIGURE 1.2**Parallelism in Teachers' and Parents' Reflective Thinking**

Richards & Lockhart (1994); Brown (1994), Connelly & Clandinin (1988); Widdowson (1993) Shieffelin & Ochs (1986), Ochs (1993)



school environment of education. The implications of this study are thus projected onto a larger system. These parallel courses taken by the ESL teachers and by the parents, both committed to bringing the “best” education to the students, can demonstrate not only the similarities in views toward “education,” but also certain gaps and differences in perceptions which surface as a result of this reflective thinking. (See figure 1.3.)

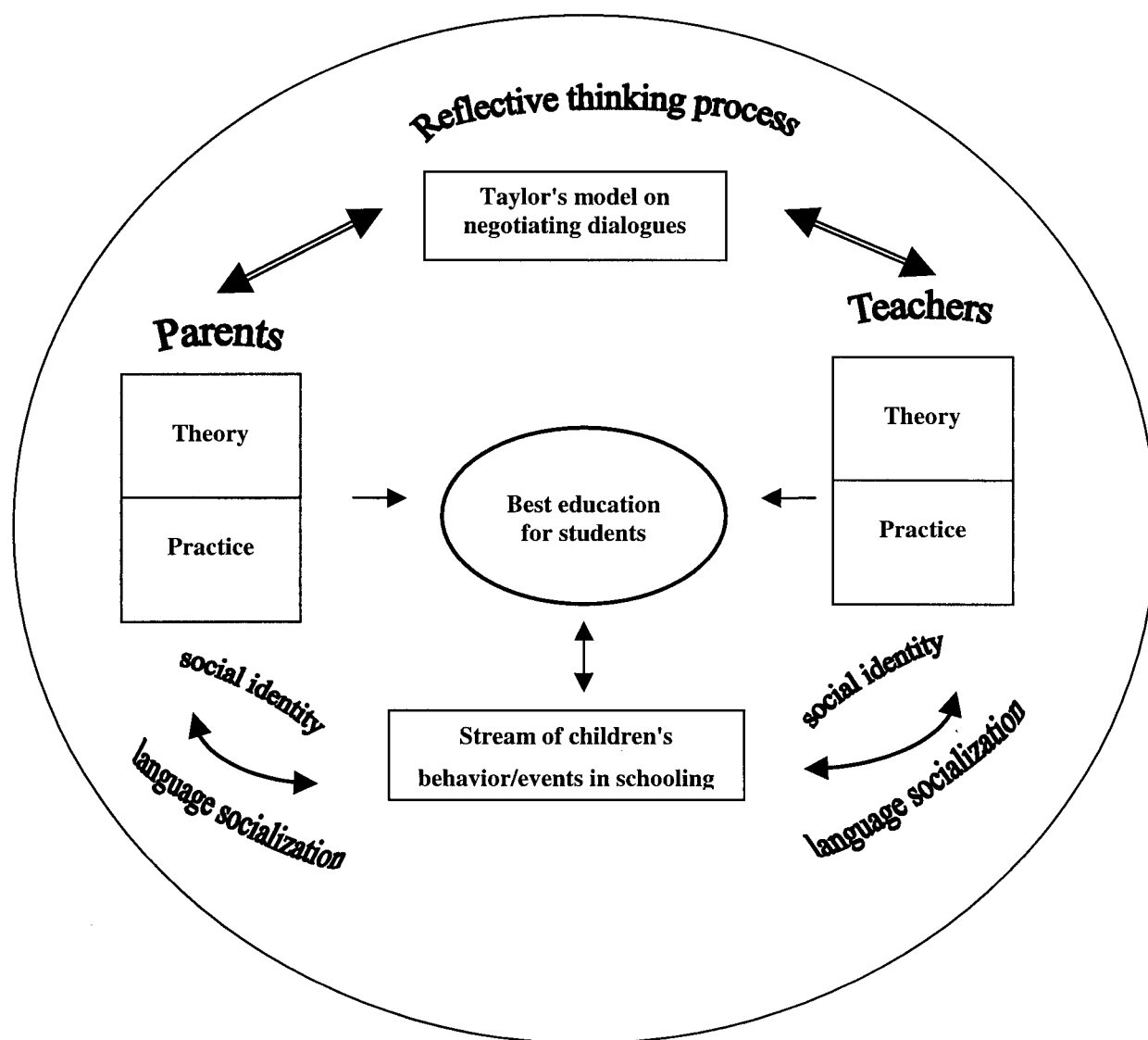
In interpreting the parent and child perspectives reflected in the stories they tell, this study situates them within a schema that includes the practices and beliefs of the schools, teachers and parents in the home and host countries. Of particular relevance, but glimpsed only through the perceptions and reflections of parents, are the possible views of ESL teachers in ESL programs in the host country. The teachers’ views on the stream of behavior or events of the students, although not included formally within the scope of this study, are an important and integral part of the context of this study. Those views may, in many cases, reveal divergent ideals, practices and social identities for themselves and the students from those expressed by the parents. Assuming divergent views between parents and teachers as to the present schooling situation, (a hypothesis suggested by the parents’ perceptions of teachers’ perceptions) this study proposes that a model such as Taylor’s (1994) on negotiating differences can be applied to these two constituents of a multicultural, multilingual secondary school community. (See figure 1.3.)

1.3 Definition of terms

Throughout the study I use some essential terms, the meanings of which need to be clarified from the onset. The first is “perception.” According to Good (1973) “perception” can be defined as “a continuous process of integration of present and past sensory impressions.” (p.413). It is the process by which a person obtains and interprets information

FIGURE 1.3**Larger Framework: Divergent Views of Parents and Teachers and Implications**

(Spradley, 1988; Ochs, 1986, 1993; Taylor, 1997)



from their awareness of external objects, conditions, relationships, etc. as a result of sensory stimulation.

Two other major terms that are used interchangeably throughout this study are “education” and “schooling.” “Education” is commonly understood in North American

culture as the “aggregate of all the processes” that helps a person gain knowledge, develop abilities, attitudes and other behaviors that create positive value in the society in which the person lives. Furthermore, it also carries the meaning of “the social process by which people are subjected to the influence of a selected and controlled environment (especially that of the school) so that they may attain social competence and optimum individual development” (Good, 1973, p.203). “Schooling” means individual training or education received at an educational institution (Good, 1973, p.516). In the Chinese language, “education” (chiao yü) is a word composed of two elements literally translated as “chiao,” to teach, and “yü,” to nurture, to raise, to cultivate, to educate. The usage of “chiao yü” is very similar to that of the English term “education” in North American usage, and includes the meanings of academic training as well as “training for good citizenship, good morals, values and attitudes” befitting the Chinese society (Ch’i Hai, 1974, p.602). “Schooling” (hsueh hsiao te chiao yü) translates to “education in schools”, similar to the meaning of the English term. For the purpose of this thesis, the terms “education” and “schooling” are used interchangeably and accommodate the above mentioned meanings of “education” in the formal context “schooling” in schools.

Two other terms used throughout this study are “dilemma” and “conflict.” This study uses the definition of “conflict” as emotional tension resulting from incompatible inner needs or drives as well as open shows of antagonism or irreconcilability toward another party. (Good, 1973, p.128.) Although “dilemma” is defined in the *Dictionary of Education* as “any argument that forces a choice among a limited number of (usually two) undesirable alternatives” (Good, 1973, p.182), this study follows the definition of “dilemma” as set out by Tracy (1997) in her discussions of dilemmas in academic discourse. Tracy succinctly notes that “[her] use of the term dilemma draws most consistently upon the concept’s weaker

meaning (tensions) than upon its strong meaning (absolute contradiction)” (p. 6). The qualities of “tensions” denoted in Tracy’s “dilemma” refer to the assumption that many problems that arise contain “tensions” due to the beliefs of the interlocutors and such tensions are not always due to direct contradictions of beliefs. In agreement with Tracy (1997) on treating “dilemmas as positioned” (p.6), this study also considers that dilemmas will be shaped and changed depending on the view one takes of the situation. Consequently, this study will use the term “conflict” interchangeably with “dilemma” as set out above, describing the collision of values and beliefs resulting in “dilemma” and from tensions within and without the interlocutors.

1.4 Research Questions

The process of arriving at the final versions of research questions posed for this study underwent several phrases. The initial focus derived from the concerns some ESL teachers had regarding immigrant parents’ desire to have their children speak only English in classes and demands that their children learn English quickly to exit ESL classes, integrating into mainstream classes at the fastest possible rate. Questions were framed for the pilot study based on ESL teachers’ concerns regarding ESL students’ L1 maintenance. For example: What are the patterns of language use in the home and among family members and friends, particularly the extent to which first or second language use is encouraged or discouraged? However, the results of the pilot study, which explored the possibility of investigating the relationship between L1 use and L2 learning, showed that the parents were more concerned that their children were speaking their first language excessively and focussed their attention on ways to assist their children in English and academic achievement. For example a mother said:

My major concern is not the issue of worrying about my children forgetting Mandarin but the issue of how to help them learn English better and faster when they are only speaking Mandarin at home or with their friends at school.

In turn, a student said:

In my ESL class I speak Mandarin most of the time. My friends help to translate the meanings (from teacher) to me.

Consequently, questions were rephrased to reflect more closely the topics of deep concern to the parents. Furthermore, relying on the suggestions of respected members of the Taiwanese-Canadian community and to assist in the settlement of new Taiwanese immigrants in the community, a question on "advice for new immigrants" was added prior to the research interviews on the notion that such advice would derive from reflections on the families' experiences in Taiwan and Canada.

The following research questions thus form the basis of the present study.

1. What are Taiwanese immigrant parents' perceptions of factors that influence their children's academic achievement?
2. What are their perceptions of their children's ESL learning experience and its relation, if any, to their academic achievement?
3. What are the children's perceptions of their ESL learning experience and its relation, if any, to their academic achievement?

1.5 Significance of the Study

In the current conditions of a growing multicultural society, with political stress and budgeting constraints, tensions arise, in the community-at-large and in the immigrant population, from increasing disenchantment, distrust and misunderstandings. The ESL programs in the metropolitan areas in the Lower Mainland region of British Columbia are not exempt from such tensions, particularly as they are related to the politically sensitive area of

immigration and multiculturalism. Increasingly, educational stakeholders and citizens at large, especially those concerned with educational reform, are looking to empirical studies on aspects of the education system, including the provincially funded ESL programs, for documentation and suggested direction.

The complex and interactive web of “supporters” who aid an ESL student toward achieving academic competency while in the process of learning English as a second language is composed principally of three groups of people: teachers, learners and parents. Of these three groups, there has been little research concerning the immigrant parents of adolescent ESL learners. Both in practical and theoretical terms, this constitutes a serious gap. Furthermore, in the Lower-Mainland area of British Columbia where Taiwanese immigrants currently constitute a large portion of the ESL classroom population, there has been no empirical study of Taiwanese parents’ views and, in turn their involvement with and influences on their adolescents’ schooling and ESL experiences. A study such as this, centered upon parents, can be of use in a number of ways:

1. By providing, through the collection and analysis of parents’ perceptions and opinions, an important but relatively unknown perspective on the efforts, achievements and failures of learners, teachers and parents;
2. By providing important information as to some parents’ perceptions of the way in which current ESL programs are fulfilling the needs and expectations of both learners and parents;
3. By providing insight into a situation where parents’ goals, beliefs, values and practices occasion dilemmas and conflict within families and with teachers and school authorities concerning ESL programs or schooling in the host country;
4. By providing a basis for further study of how the perceptions and actions of parents shape the socio-linguistic environment for second language learning, and the effect that environment has on the students’ ESL learning achievement and academic achievement;
5. By providing a basis upon which dialogues that lead toward mutual understanding can begin to occur between and within the schools, the parents and the community-at-large.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

A variety of literature was consulted to illuminate background information, form theoretical support for the various emergent themes of the findings and for possible theoretical applications of this study. The categories of literature consulted include 1) cross-cultural studies of parents and the academic achievement of their children, 2) studies of education in Taiwan and 3) studies of Taiwanese immigrants to North America.

Although this study does not discuss acculturation and cross-cultural adjustments of the participant immigrant families, it recognizes that such factors and their effects play an intrinsic part in immigrant lives. Brislin (1981) in his chapters on “the processes of adjustment”, addresses the various degrees of differences between the experiences of sojourners and immigrants. He defines people’s cultural adjustment as including such core elements as “people’s satisfaction, perceived acceptance by hosts, and ability to function during everyday activities without severe stress” (p.271) and differentiates between coping styles, long-term and short-term adjustments, and adjustment in a monistic or pluralistic society. Such delineation is useful in understanding the migration and adjustment process of the Taiwanese parent sample. Furthermore, Furnham’s (1986) explanations of the Chinese immigrants to North America as a variety of “cultural” travellers afford insight into the possible culturally influenced types of psycho-social adaptation such as “goal-striving stress” or the influence of Confucianism on core values and behavioural norms.

2.1 Immigrant Parents and the Academic Achievement of their Children

There have been many quantitative and empirical studies on parents’ and immigrant parents’ impact on the academic achievement of their children (ranging from elementary to secondary levels) in both the psychosocial and the education fields. For the purposes of this

literature review, these studies are divided into the following two categories: 1) parental attitudes toward changes brought about by social and cultural adjustment, 2) family background and attitudes as factors in children's or adolescents' educational expectations and outcomes.

2.1.2 Parental Attitudes toward Adjustment Changes

In the area of parental attitudes toward adjustment changes, Aronowitz (1992) and Hayes (1992) deal specifically with the adjustment of immigrant children as a function of their parents' attitude to change. Hayes, using Ogbu's model (1986), looks at the sharing of "academic ideology" between "voluntary immigrants" such as the Chinese, Punjabi Indians and Central Americans, and "involuntary" minorities such as Mexican-Americans, African-Americans, American Indians or native Hawaiians. She claims that children of "voluntary immigrants" are not subject to disproportionate school failure, as are involuntary minorities, and implies that they have more successful academic experiences if their parents are educationally experienced and involved in the children's formal education and learning experiences.

Aronowitz (1992) also finds that there is a significant positive relationship between parental attitude toward social change and new experiences and the psychological and academic adjustment in school of both immigrant and native speakers' children. His study is based on a comparative variable analysis of Russian Jewish immigrant children and American Jewish native speakers with an overall mean age of 11.53 years. The demographics of Aronowitz's study bears a close resemblance to the sample in this study, particularly in the breakdown of relevant categories considered in the analysis, for example, parental education, parental occupation and socioeconomic status, and political, social and educational reasons for leaving their home country. An interesting factor for consideration is how Aronowitz's

findings may or may not apply to the context of the Taiwanese immigrants in terms of the strength, in psychosocial terms, of the parent's ability to mediate the experience of migration and relocation for their children which, in turn, affects the children's successful adjustment in the mainstream.

2.1.3 Family Background and Parental Attitudes

There are numerous studies based on assumptions that family background and parental attitudes affect children or adolescents' educational expectations and outcomes.

Seigner (1983), in her review of psychological studies on parents' educational expectations and children's academic achievements, explains that the antecedents of parents' expectations are: 1) parents' own aspirations, 2) feedback from school, and 3) parental knowledge. The mediating factors of these expectations are achievement-supporting behaviors, differential reinforcement, and the child's own aspirations. Seigner's comprehensive analysis of empirical research includes studies of white, black, Italian-American and Jewish parents from middle to lower classes with children in a variety of age groups. The studies reviewed support the general contention that "children's academic performance covaries with parents' expectations" (p.4) and that "high achieving children tend to come from families who have high expectations for them and set standards to make greater demands at an earlier age" (Boocock, 1972, cited in Seigner 1983, p.4).

Looking at the broader perspective of interpreting the variation of children's educational expectations as a function of parental expectations, Smith (1995, 1981) notes that adolescents are more "inclined to agree with parents' educational goals when adolescents were successful in school, parents were well educated, and parents appeared to agree on goals" (1995, p.156). Furthermore, he states, in reporting investigations that distinguish between the mother and father, that an adolescent will have "a stronger motivation to adopt a

goal that he or she perceives as supported by both parents than a goal that appears to be advocated by only one" (p.170). Although Smith's study is limited to white and black families in the United States, the study bears some significance when considering the "triangulation" outcome of the comments between the Taiwanese fathers or mothers and their children in this study.

2.1.4 Parenting Styles

In considering the Taiwanese adolescents' educational achievements, one must look at the type and degree of causal influence the Taiwanese parents have on their teenagers and how such influences are viewed as positive or negative causal attributions in North American and the Asian societies.

On the topic of parenting styles, Glasgow, Dornbusch, Troyer, Steinberg and Ritter (1997), in their comprehensive survey of 11,000 predominantly Caucasian high school students in California and Wisconsin, shed light on how parenting styles affect adolescents' attributions regarding educational outcomes. According to Glasgow, et al.(1997), attributions "are inferences about the perceived causes of observed behaviors and events" (p.509). Causal attributions produce affective reactions and expectations for future success in adolescents and in turn, guide achievement-related behaviors on subsequent tasks such as task choice, persistence, intensity and diligence. Linking functional or dysfunctional attributional styles of adolescents to parenting styles, Glasgow, et al. hypothesize that among the four distinct parenting styles, "authoritarian, authoritative, indulgent, and neglectful", derived from Baumrind's (1971) "authoritarian, authoritative and permissive" parenting typology, authoritative parents are the most successful in fostering adolescents' personal and social responsibility. Glasgow, et al.'s (1997) findings support the findings of Baumrind (1971) and Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts, and Fraleigh (1987) studies.

This raises interesting cross-cultural questions. Viewed from a Euro-North American perspective, an “authoritarian” parenting role is defined as one that places excessive demands upon the child, is less accepting of the child’s opinion, and fails to reward desired behavior while punishing undesired behavior (Renihan and Renihan, 1995). Furthermore, according to Glasgow, et al. (1997) “authoritarian” parents are categorized as “highly demanding and unresponsive...” and, together with “neglectful” parents, are associated with a higher proportion of dysfunctional attributions in the students. Dysfunctional attributional style implies “lack of faith in one’s performance capacities and a reluctance to assume responsibility for one’s behavior and the outcomes it may generate” (p.510). Glasgow, et al. conclude that attributional style is not a primary mediator of the relations between parenting styles and adolescents’ educational outcomes; although they hypothesize that dysfunctional attributional style as a result of authoritarian or neglectful parenting styles lowers subsequent levels of achievement behavior and outcomes in the adolescent.

Dornbusch et al. (1987), and Steinberg, Dornbusch and Brown (1992) further note, however, the paradox between such conclusions and the fact that Asian students receiving the highest grade-point averages had the highest covariance with “authoritarian” parenting styles. Chao (1994) succinctly addresses this paradox. She states that the concepts “authoritative” and “authoritarian” are somewhat Eurocentric and do not capture the important culturally bound features of Chinese child rearing, especially in explaining children’s school success. Chao explains that the Chinese Confucian concept of “chiao hsün” (training) entails an “authoritarian” approach, embracing firm discipline steeped in “indigenous” sociocultural traditions and bearing the qualities of “devotion”, “care”, “love” and “firm control”, contrary to the connotations of the western term “authoritarian” (Chao, 1994, p.1112).

Fulgini (1997) in his quantitative cross-cultural study of Latino, East Asian, Filipino and European immigrant groups, stresses that adolescents from immigrant families receive significantly higher grades than their peers from native families despite their parents' limited English and familiarity with American schools. His study shows that only a small portion of the success could be attributed to parental education or socioeconomic background. The significant correlate of achievement was the strong emphasis on education's importance shared by the students, their parents and even peers. On the other hand, in Duran and Weffer's (1992) longitudinal study of Mexican immigrant high school students, the researchers note that while shared values between family and students do influence student behavior at school, in that students demonstrate willingness to take on extra work, "the influence of family educational values was not strong enough to affect achievement outcomes" (Duran & Weffer, 1992, p.179).

There are an overwhelmingly large number of studies which confirm that in general, voluntary or involuntary immigrant parents from any ethnic background have high aspirations for their children's education and future (Aronowitz, 1992; BCTF ESL/ESD Research Project, 1993; Duran & Wefer, 1992; Fuglini, 1997; Hayes 1992; Lee & Stevenson, 1996; Porter, 1994; Schneider & Lee, 1990).

Interestingly, although there are many cross cultural studies on parents concerning their children's academic achievement, there do not appear to be ethnographic studies focussing on the interpretation of divergent beliefs regarding educational goals and practices such as is undertaken in this study. Gougeon (1993), in the first phase of his ethnographic study on urban schools and immigrant families, conducted interviews with 27 teachers in Alberta, Canada. The findings regarding ESL parents, based on the teachers' perceptions, are that parents are "suspicious about the lack of national entrance exams", distrustful of the

Canadian education system, resistant to the “Canadianization” of their children, “patriarchal”, and feel “powerless” with their children. Gougeon stresses that there is a need for parents to “feel connected with school and understand its values”, to grow intercultural awareness, to learn collaborative communication skills and be “self-empowered”. (p.285)

Such a Canadian study is highly relevant for a study such as this, focusing as it does on perspectives of parents of ESL students in British Columbia.

2.1.5 Asian Families and Educational Achievements

In-depth studies in the psychosocial and educational fields into the interrelationships between the home environment and high academic results among Asian students and Chinese American students are pertinent to the schema of understanding of the Taiwanese parents in this study. There are numerous cross-cultural studies between Chinese, Japanese and American families conducted by Stevenson and his colleagues, (Chen, Lee & Stevenson, 1996; Fuligni & Stevenson 1995; Stevenson & Lee, 1990), that present longitudinal correlated results revealing a high stability of achievement relationships within all three societies. Specifically, the Chinese or Japanese students tend to outperform their American peers in subjects such as math or science due to the great value placed on education (Fuglini & Stevenson, 1995). Such value stems from early home environmental influences such as parental or maternal involvement (Stevenson & Lee, 1990), control of time used in studying and socializing (Fuligni & Stevenson, 1995), parents’ demographic characteristics and parents’ evaluations of their children’s academic achievement (Chen, Lee & Stevenson, 1996).

From an ethnographic point of view, Schneider and Lee (1990), in their cross-cultural research of East Asian-American and Anglo-American students, stress the importance of examining the relationship between macro sociocultural factors and micro interpersonal

interactions to explore why some East Asian students (Chinese, Korean, Japanese) experience school success. The researchers' astutely present findings link school success to East Asian "cultural socioeconomic characteristics and interactive relationships among children, parents, teachers, and peer groups" (p. 373).

Interestingly, while the just referred to studies find positive correlations between the home environment and their largely elementary student populations, Mau's (1997) similar quantitative study of grade 10 Asian American and White American adolescents, reveals a negative relationship or no relationship between parental involvement and Asian students' academic achievement. Mau's evidence shows that the "more helping and controlling parents were in their children's school work...the less likely their children were to perform well" and also that the parents' "limited English proficiency" lead to little or no involvement with their children's schoolwork or school activities.

2.2 Taiwan Education and Immigration to British Columbia

2.2.1 Recent Taiwanese Immigrant Parents

Of particular relevance to this study, is the literature on Asian education which clarified the impact of such education systems on the emigration of such families as the Taiwanese in the study.

Tseng (1995) gives clear explanations of the type of "leapfrog migration" of recent Taiwanese immigrants to Los Angeles, and by extension, his study is particularly relevant to this study's British Columbian Taiwanese immigrants. For example, similar to this study's demographics, Tseng describes the Taiwanese immigrants to Los Angeles thus "possessing better financial resources than most immigrants, the Taiwanese tend to move into middle - upper-middle - class communities composed of predominantly white residents" (p.33). His discussion of the "Taiwanese exodus" sheds light on pertinent issues of emigration, such as

the political, socioeconomic and educational background information relevant to the participants of this study. For example Tseng (1995) notes the present day political uncertainty in Taiwan where “the Taiwanese have constantly worried about their country’s long-term prospects with regard to its relationship with the People’s republic of China.” (p.37). Furthermore, describing Taiwan as a “haven for making money” and “hell for living”, his article indicates that those who express intentions of migrating due to their increasing discontent with the quality of life in Taiwan tend to be “young, professional, and college educated” (Hsiao, 1991, cited in Tseng, 1995, p.38).

In examining social class and the effect of education on Taiwanese parental values, Ma and Smith (1993) contend that the Taiwanese parents fit the pattern of trends in parental socialization values where those with higher education shifted away from traditional Asian toward Western child-rearing values. However, Ma and Smith note that contrary to the pattern of trends, the higher the level of Taiwanese parental education, the “greater [the] emphasis on obedience” that is placed on children.

2.2.2 Taiwan and East Asia

Insofar as the role of schooling has been identified as a critical contributing factor in the tremendous recent economic success of Taiwan, one ponders the paradox of the exodus of many of Taiwan’s valuable professionals and business citizens, citing, in many cases, educational reasons. Morris (1996) depicts a background of Taiwan in the context of the “Four Little Tigers” (Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea and Singapore), where he compares some significant differences between the countries, including the role of the state, sources of educational funding and school curriculum. Young (1995) sets out a clear account of educational development and investment as related to political and economic development in Taiwan. In essence, the school system in Taiwan, similar to that of Korea (Sorenson, 1994),

is subject to state control, and “functions as a mechanism for political socialization...strengthen the regime’s authoritarian rule through ideological control...the resultant long-term political stability, among other factors, has sustained economic growth” (p.123). Young further states that with the changes in development in Taiwan and the “changing notion of development” toward more individual welfare, there is a transformation in people’s evaluation of and expectations for education.

2.2.3 Taiwan Education

Due to the competitive Asian “testocracy” system (Sorenson, 1994), where high school and college entrances are governed by national entrance examinations, placing future education, career and the resulting “honor or disgrace of the entire family” at stake, supplementary schools or “cram schools” are widely used by students after school (Yang, 1995). According to Yang’s report, there are presently over 1500 cram schools in Taiwan with a total enrolment of more than 675,000 students in 1993. The schools help elementary and high school students and those who have failed previous entrance exams to strengthen their learning by training them for entrance examinations in core subjects such as math, physics, chemistry, physics or English. Cram schools are accepted by “the government and many parents...as a means to actualize their expectations for children” (Yang, 1995).

The intense and tremendous pressure placed on the students caused by the historically linked Confucian style examination systems are reiterated in studies on Taiwanese, People’s Republic of China, Korean, and Japanese education (Lin, 1984; Lin & Chen 1995; Ohta, 1986; Sorenson, 1994; Su, Su & Goldstein, 1994; Yang 1995). The studies all refer to the phenomenon of “examination hell” (Lin & Chen, 1995), characteristic of the students’ school training, where the high school students are given practice tests, sometimes every day, in preparation for the national entrance exams which occur once a year (in July in Taiwan). Lin

and Chen (1995) refer to the philosophy underlying such practice as “to enable the students to shoot a mosquito, they should be equipped with anti-aircraft guns” (p.154).

Lin (1984) and Lin and Chen (1995), carefully analyse and discuss the psychological consequences for the mental health of Chinese students and their families as a result of such academic pressures. School children in the East Asian education systems are termed products of the “Narrow Gate Syndrome”, (Lin, 1984), a social phenomenon caused by the extraordinary pressures of the entrance exams, precipitating ill effects such as “chronic fatigue, nervousness, and anxiety attacks among school children” (Lin, 1984). Furthermore, the shame and guilt over an actual failure or the prospect of failing an exam sometimes results in truancy, juvenile delinquency, depression or even suicides in children (Lin, 1984, Lin and Chen, 1995). The impact of the “double pressure from family and schools” including parental physical and verbal abuse, and the resulting psychological difficulties due to the child’s failure to meet the family’s academic expectations, are explicit through the voices of the children in Lin and Chen’s study conducted in mainland China. Both Lin and Lin and Chen advocate the need for balancing educational goals with other aspects of students’ lives calling for educational reform in Taiwan and China.

There seems to be little literature written in English specifically addressing teaching and learning styles in Taiwan’s high schools. As a general observation, Lin delivers a critical view of Taiwan’s classrooms, referring to the learning styles in Taiwan where “only essential subjects” are emphasized, rote learning is a major instrument for the children’s acquisition of knowledge and skills and there is a lack of learning through problem solving and critical thinking. Interestingly, Stevenson and Stigler (1992) in their research state that in the elementary schools in Taiwan and Japan, teachers follow the student-centered self construction approach where elementary school teachers “rely on students to generate ideas

and evaluate the correctness of ideas” in their grade one to grade five sample. Although Stevenson and Stigler have not address Taiwanese high schools, nonetheless they support Lin’s (1984) description of teachers in Asian high schools as “authoritarian purveyor[s] of information, one who expects students to listen and memorize correct answers or correct procedures rather than to construct knowledge themselves” (p.188).

In East Asian cultures, perceptions of teaching quality, the individual teacher’s competence and the school standing are closely tied to the success rates in the children’s entrance exams to quality high schools or universities. (Lin, 1984, Sorensen, 1994, Su, et al. 1994). The teacher’s word is “law”, and it is rare that a student would question a teacher’s authority, whatever his or her private thoughts might be (Sorenson, 1994).

Hence, the Taiwanese notion of the teacher, teaching style and examination style significantly contrasts with those currently prevailing in ESL classrooms where, according to Brown (1994), teachers are encouraged to use “interactive techniques” and “group or individual self evaluations” in a “learner-centered”, “cooperative learning” classroom. This type of approach is succinctly explained to parents of high school-age ESL students in an ESL handbook from a local school. (No author, 19). The learners are given a sense of “ownership” of their learning by being offered choices throughout their course of learning, which may include curriculum planning and evaluation styles, in order to increase their interest and generate intrinsic motivation (Brown, 1994; Nunan, 1988.)

2.2.4 Taiwanese Immigrants in British Columbia

Against the above backdrop of the Taiwanese system, Chong, et al.’s (1994) pioneering preliminary study of the adjustment of Taiwanese immigrant families in British Columbia, indicates that over 92% of the recent immigrants (arrived within three years of the study) immigrated for the “educational environment” or for a “secure social system”. (p.11)

The study follows the same type of demographics as this study, surveying 81 Taiwanese parents in the entrepreneurial or investor class of immigrants in the upper educational and socio-economic ranges. Although the researchers stress that the findings are inconclusive due to the relatively small sample, the results show that “sixty percent of the sample thought that they have made the right decision to migrate to British Columbia, while the rest were uncertain or hesitant to answer”. (p.3). Furthermore, fifty-six percent of the subjects indicate a negative attitude toward migration due either to long separations from spouse and/or family or because they “cannot adjust to the new environment.” (p.19). While cautioning as to the use of the findings of Chong et al’s study as a sole indicator of the psychosocial frame of mind of the Taiwanese parents in the present research, it is relevant to the schema of this study’s parent interviews.

The British Columbia Teachers’ Federation (BCTF) Focus Group Reports by ESL/ESD teachers (1994) and parents of ESL students’ (1996, 1993), provides a general review of the Lower Mainland metropolitan area teachers’ and parents’ views on issues ranging from administration, pedagogy, parent-teacher-student relationships, extracurricular activities to school home-workers. Of particular interest are the contrasts of concerns between the teachers and the parents on the subject of teacher-parent communication. Although both the teachers and the parents echo the need to facilitate better communication between the home and the school, the parents emphasize their lack of English and knowledge of the school system (BCTF 1993; Porter, 1996), while the teachers mainly stress concerns about the “astronaut family” syndrome, (where one or more parents remains permanently or predominantly in the home country to secure income) and the difficulty of communicating with parents in an environment of increasingly diverse cultures represented in the community (BCTF, 1994).

2.3 Theoretical Frameworks and Applications

2.3.1 Reflective Teaching and Reflective Thinking

In searching for a premise which links the parents' narratives of cross-cultural learning experiences to that of current practices in pedagogy, the similarity between the purpose and process of parents' "reflections" and the teachers' inquiries into reflective teaching became evident. Richards and Lockhart (1994), in discussing procedures that build an ESL teacher's professional growth, stress that "critical reflection (of a teacher) involves examining teaching experiences as a basis for evaluation and decision making and as a source for change" (p.4). These researchers establish the importance of understanding the dimensions of a teacher's teaching practice, which includes examining, or re-examining the teacher's beliefs, thinking processes and knowledge. Such an "underlying framework or schema...guides the teacher's classroom actions." (p.29). Richards and Lockhart (1994) term the "culture of teaching" as based on a teacher's "goals, values and beliefs." By analogy, the term may be extended to embrace the experience of parents in this study as they reflect on their "culture of parenting in children's schooling" based on the framework of their goals, values and beliefs. Furthermore, in the realm of curriculum development, the importance of teachers using personal knowledge and experience as the basis for improvement or change in their theoretical and practical curriculum planning is being strongly advocated (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; Richards and Lockhart, 1994; Widdowson 1993). This process of gaining insight by reflecting on the teachers' own "stories", practical knowledge, and the sharing of such experiences, again, parallels the acts of Taiwanese parents in this study.

In a similar analogy to the present study, Widdowson (1993) addresses the recognition of "the significance of the teacher's own thinking, and the particular socio-cultural circumstances of teaching" (p.265). He explains that teachers need to adjust their

teaching to accommodate “the cultural expectations and norms of behavior brought into the classroom by the participants” (p.264), but cautions that “taking local conditions into account in devising appropriate programs is not the same as conceding to them as determinants of what can be done.” One needs to use “critical appraisal and application” to evaluate the relevance of incoming ideas (p. 271).

A pertinent reflective comparative study conducted by Su, Su and Goldstein (1994), addressing the teaching and learning of science in American and Chinese high schools, reveals findings that illuminate and support the perceptions of the Taiwanese participants on the differences in schooling. Using their reflective perceptions, visiting Chinese science teachers from Mainland China, observing American high school science classes, note that the Chinese science teachers team-taught, conduct teacher-centered classes, employ deductive reasoning, do reviews and repeat drills of exercises whereas American teachers teach individually, have student-centered classes and encourage inductive reasoning (p.258-263). Based on observations of both systems, the visiting Chinese teachers’ recommendations for science education instruction reform in the United States include, among others, that there should be increased “communication between teachers and parents,” “enforce[ment of] certain rules and regulations in classroom so as to create a disciplined learning environment”, and “increase[ed] (preferably double) exercises and homework in math and sciences for students” (p.269). The parallel between the observations and the final recommendations of the visiting Chinese teachers and those of the Taiwanese parents in this study is an uncanny one. Su, et al. (1994) may fill the gap as a model literature representation for this study from the point of view of revealing the similar views of Chinese educators to the Taiwanese parents in this study in terms of what promotes academic success.

2.3.2 Investment, Social identity & Motivation

In earlier sociolinguistic research, the concept of “motivation” is used to address the learner’s subjectivity and agency in second language acquisition. Gardner, (1968, 1985), and Gardner & Lambert, (1972, 1959) in their earlier works, argue that “integrative motive”, which refers to the learner’s desire to integrate into the target language community, is the key to successful language learning. On the other hand, the instrumental motive, which is learning a language for utilitarian purposes, is not as powerful or effective. More recently, Gardner and MacIntyre (1991) reiterate that since integrative motivation is part of a favourable attitude toward the target language community, it has a continual influence on language learning and use. Furthermore, since an instrumental motive “is tied to a specific goal, its influence would tend to be maintained only until that goal is achieved” (p.70).

While Schumann (1986) cites Gardner’s two motivational orientations as one of the psychological affective factors in his model of factors influencing acculturation, he adds that instrumental motivation can be equally as powerful and effective as the integrative motives, especially when anti-integrative motives are involved. For example, in settings such as Saudi Arabia, there need only be instrumental motivation to acquire English for technical and professional purposes, or with a colonised group such as Mexican-Americans in Southwest United States where proficiency in English is associated with anti-integrative motivation (pp. 383-384). Schumann also notes that motivations are “complex constructs” that interact with many other variables such as social, affective, personality, cognitive, biological aptitude, personal input, and instructional factors (p.380).

The “Gardnerian” model that spawns this categorization of motivation is not, however, without problems (Crookes & Schmidt, 1991; Dornyei, 1994, cited in Gardner & Tremblay, 1994). Methodologically, the studies by Gardner (1968, 1985) that establish and

develop the integrative and instrumental orientations have all been quantitative, making use of questionnaires and factor analysis. Furthermore, criticism has been directed particularly at the research's limited context (the use of French as a second language medium, mostly in Canada with some work in the U.S.), its lack of supporting evidence from other cultures and its failure to consider and account for individual variation in motivation (Gardner & Tremblay, 1994; Gass & Selinker, 1994).

With the recognition that an individual's social identity is complex, "multiple, fluid, and often contradictory" (Weedon, 1987, cited in Pierce, 1995), the notion of "investment" (Pierce, 1995 pp.16-20) in one's social identity that addresses the relationship of the subject to the changing social world may reflect a more realistic and feasible approach. Pierce (1995) argues and confirms that "motivation is not a fixed personality trait but must be understood with reference to social relations of power that create the possibilities for language learners to speak" (p.26). Accordingly, an investment in the target language means an investment in a "learner's" own social identity, "an identity which is constantly changing across time and space" (p.18). By extension, for the purpose of this study, one may apply Pierce's term "learner" to either the participant parent or the child, or both.

Pierce's "investment" theoretical framework is supported by McKay and Wong (1996) in their study of Chinese adolescent immigrant students in California. The researchers in their "contextualist perspective" identified the multiple discourses of the focal students and how they negotiated multiple and often contradictory identities depending on their social situation. In contrast to "investment-enhancement" seen as a major concern among adult immigrant women (Pierce, 1995), it is noted that agency-enhancement and identity-enhancement appeared to be the paramount considerations for the Chinese adolescent students in McKay and Wong's study.

The terms “motivation” and “investment” as expressed and elaborated in the above studies are crucial in examining the possible affective sociolinguistic and psychosocial factors that surround the Taiwanese parent and student participants in this study.

2.3.3 Social Identity and Language Socialization

The students’ ESL learning experience is more than a matter of simply learning a language. It has implications for wider social relations, including social identity. Rather than merely second language learning, it is better described as language socialization.

In the course of the interviews with the immigrant parents in this study, the parents’ sense of loss and helplessness were often conveyed, causing the researcher to sense that the parents were struggling with their own social identities in the midst of their children’s shifts in social identities. Ochs (1993) argues that speakers “attempt to establish the social identities of themselves and others through verbally performing certain social acts and verbally displaying certain stances” (p.288). She defines “social act” as “any socially recognized, goal-directed behavior” and “social stance” as a “display of a socially recognized point of view or attitude.” The parents’ accounts of their children’s schooling experiences shed light on the language socialization and social identities of both parents and children. These accounts may be seen as “verbal activities” (Mohan & Smith, 1991), constituting a language socialization process for the parents that displays their “social identity”. Secondly, the parents’ reflective insights on their children’s formal learning reveal the parents’ views about the language socialization process and issues of social identity for their children. Schieffelin and Ochs’s (1986) definition of language socialization reinforces the above two points where “language socialization has as its goal the understanding of how persons become competent members of social groups and the role of language in the process” (Schieffelin and Ochs 1986, p.167).

2.3.4 Cross-Cultural Educational Socialization Goals and Parental Involvement

The important psychosocial aspects involved in parenting that are essential for predicting a child's academic achievement outcome include socialization goals, parental practices used to reach those goals, as well as parenting style and the influence of the socialization goals on parenting practices and styles (Darling and Steinberg, 1993). In a recent comparative study of European-American and East Asian parents in the U.S. with respect to parental socialization goals, parental control and parenting style, Chao (1996) finds additional support for her 1994 finding that East Asian children's academic achievement is determined by "family-based control", described as "control for family honor and success." She points out that "family-based control", including "indirect" parental involvement in schooling, is predictive of achievement for East Asians. "Indirect involvement" refers to parents not involved in working directly with children as their tutors (e.g. helping them with homework) or as participants in school programs, but rather "controlling" children's extracurricular time use, study environment, buying adequate supplies, enrolling them in supplemental courses, hiring tutors, monitoring and "providing a stable and educationally nurturing home environment" (p.5).

Chao (1994) and Darling and Steinberg (1993) stress the necessity to make "qualitative distinctions of parental involvement" in cross-cultural parental styles, where East Asian parents are largely moved by their "socialization goals." Socialization goals are differentiated from both parenting style and parenting practices in that "the goals comprise parents' beliefs and attitudes" (Chao, 1996, p.4) and are embedded in specific cultural values. For the Chinese, Japanese and Korean parents, in particular, mothers, academic expectations are based on what Chao terms the "collectivist orientation" as contrasted to the "individualistic orientations" of the Euro-American mothers (Chao, 1996, p.8; Stevenson, &

Lee, 1990; Stevenson & Stigler, 1992). Chao (1996) refers to “collectivist orientation” to mean “individuality and self-expression are deemphasized over sensitivity to and cooperation with others, especially the family.” (p.4) Consequently, educational socialization goals are comprised mostly of “collective orientation” practices where “family-based control” influences the academic outcomes of the students.

2.3.5 Homework and Academic Achievement

In the “back to basics” movement in education in the late 1970’s and early 1980’s, the use of homework to further achievement, inspired controversial debates among and between parents, teachers and schools (Lee & Pruitt, 1979; Strother, 1984.) There is relatively little research on homework as an integral part of secondary school experience, in particular relating to parental influence. In the practical area of delineating to teachers the various purposes for assignments, Lee & Pruitt (1979) use a taxonomy of homework where assignments are classified into four types. “Practice assignments” mean the use of “drilled or reinforced skills and information covered in class”, “preparation assignments” prepare students for the next class, “extension assignments” require the students “to go beyond simple familiarization to apply ideas or skills to new situations,” and “creative assignments” involve students in integrating skills and concepts to produce original work (pp.32-35). Strother (1984) suggests that American teachers follow the recommendations of the “Forum of Educational Organization Leaders” of assigning one hour to elementary and two or more hours of homework per day to secondary students.

There are assumptions, and confirmations, that homework, the amount of time students spend on homework, and the extent of parental involvement in the student’s homework process are powerful variables in the impact on student educational achievement (Keith, Reimers, Fehrmann, Pottebaum & Aubey, 1986).

In the area of psycho-educational research, Pratt, Filipovich and Bountrogrianni (1995), in their study of Anglo-Saxon, East Indian and Greek parents of junior high students and their teachers, suggest that teachers' views differ considerably from those of all participant parents, who believe in the effectiveness of helping their children with homework. The teachers endorse those parents who use "authoritative" (Baumrind, 1971) decision-making patterns in to structuring homework situations and monitoring homework performance. Teachers place less value on parents' engagement in helping their children with homework than do parents in the study (p.180).

In the areas of educational research on immigrant parents' views on involvement with their children's education, the qualitative studies of Ghuman and Wong (1989) and Constantino, Cui & Faltis (1995) reveal homework as an emergent topic of concern. Ghuman and Wong's (1989) research on Hong Kong parents in Britain reconfirm that Chinese parents value education highly and note that the participant parents have a reasonable degree of faith in British schools, but "they would like more homework for their children" (p.139). The Chinese parents comment on the "discrepancy" between the British and the Hong Kong system where "in this country (England), the amount of homework is not enough" and "Hong Kong schools set too much homework for children" (p.137). "Extra homework" is requested to be given by teachers in order that the children "won't spend too much time on watching TV" (p.137). Results from interviews with the teachers and Chinese parents of an elementary school in the U.S. indicate that both the teachers and parents see homework as a powerful link between the school and the home. From both teachers' and parents' perspectives (including those with limited English), the parents' main role and responsibility in their children's schooling process is to monitor and check homework assignments (Constantino, et al. p.47-48).

Among psychosocial studies on the effect of homework on academic achievement among Japanese, Taiwanese and American elementary students, Chen and Stevenson (1989) indicate that there is "no consistent linear or curvilinear relation between the amount of time spent on homework and the child's level of academic achievement" (p.556). Furthermore, the researchers conclude that in cultures where teachers and parents place great emphasis on academic achievement (Taiwan and Japan), there are more favourable attitudes about homework among teachers, students and parents than in cultures (such as American) where school is not so strongly emphasised. Consequently homework may have greater positive effects on the students from those cultures (p.561).

In contrast to Stevenson's studies, Keith, et al.'s (1986) results indicate that for secondary-school-age children, there is no meaningful direct effect of parental involvement on achievement, although the researchers state that it is reasonable to assume that with elementary-school-age children, parental involvement may have different effects. Furthermore, and interestingly, Keith, et al. note in their findings on high school senior students that more than half of their sample report doing three hours or less of homework per week, whereas 46% report spending three hours or more per weekday watching TV. In their analysis, the researchers discover that TV viewing has a small negative effect in comparison with the positive effect of intellectual ability on the achievement of the high school seniors (p.378-379). This is an revealing contrast to high school students in Taiwan or China who spend four to six hours per day doing assignments, including possibly attending supplemental classes (Lin & Chen 1995; Yang, 1995). Assignments mainly consist of rote learning, exercises from textbooks and recitations of certain subject matters, a practice dating back to the training of "scholars" base on the Confucian practices related to preparation for standardized exams (Lin, 1984; Lin & Chen, 1995, Yang, 1995).

Furthermore, in contrast to Stevenson & Chen's (1989) claim of positive effects of homework on elementary students due to the favorable attitudes of parents and the school in Taiwan (p.561), Lin and Chen's (1995) study portrays strong Chinese students' sentiments, "since the beginning of ninth grade, I seem to have entered a small dark room filled with assignments... we seem to be living in hell, with no freedom from morning till night" (p.157).

2.3.6 Discipline and Academic Achievement

The studies on Asian educational systems all equate a child's school education with "training" and depicted parents and teachers as "authoritarian" (Chao, 1996, 1994; Lin, 1984; Lin & Chen 1995; Ohta, 1986; Sorenson, 1994; Su, et al, 1994; Yang 1995). Teachers take the role of parents in schools and exercise "regimentation" and discipline over students in order to foster socially desirable and culturally approved behavior (Chao, 1994). To maintain good discipline in the students means a better chance of the student achieving well in national exams. Such views are further supported in studies of immigrant Chinese in which parents comment on their children's need for more discipline in the English (Ghuman & Wong, 1989) and the U.S. education systems (Constantino, et al. 1995). Parents in Ghuman & Wong's study state, in particular, that there is a need for teachers to enforce discipline on their students due to a "lack of respect of the ...education system." Such views are contrary to the principles of building "self-esteem" and encouraging "self-confidence" in ESL students through teachers' open display of "a supportive attitude" with "warm and fuzzy patience and empathy in North America" (Brown, 1994, p.23; No author, 1993).

Furthermore, severe discipline such as corporal punishment, which appears to occur in Taiwan, is said in psychological studies to have "negative effects" on youths, constituting a "potential source of stress and depression" (Turner & Finkelhor, 1996). Within the Western

context, “authoritarian discipline”, which emphasizes the use of physical punishment contributes to “negative self-judgments (self-esteem) as well as lower perceived personal control (mastery) over life outcomes” (Belsky, Learner, & Spanier, 1984, cited in Turner & Finkelhor, 1996).

2.3.7 Theory of Pluralism, Identity, Negotiation and Recognition

In his work on multiculturalism, the Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor identifies the importance of “the politics of recognition” (Taylor, 1994.)

The oral discourse of the Taiwanese parents and their adolescents bespeak themes of “plurality” and “identity recognition” both among the participants, between the participants and the teachers at the high school research site, as well as between the participants and the community at large. Taylor’s models of “modern plurality,” “dialogical human identity”, and “politics of equal value and respect” serve as a theoretical underpinning for the findings and interpretations of this study as well as a vision for implications based on the recognition of differences.

Plurality in this present age, according to Taylor’s hermeneutic rule, is seen in two aspects: 1) plurality of values and cultures, 2) plurality of forms of reflection which may be partial to one’s “culture, tradition, philosophical genre, gender, ethnicity, language and other factors” (Tully, 1994, p. xiv). Recognizing plurality begins with a “plurality of conversations” where “interlocutors in a dialogue speak on their own diverse terms, traditions, aims and demands” (Tully, 1994, p.xv).

Taylor views the creation of human identity as “dialogical” based on our response to our relations, including our actual dialogues with others (Taylor, 1994, p.32-35). He further states that “our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the misrecognition of others” which could lead to a mirroring reflection of a “confining or

demeaning picture” of oneself (p.25). The misrecognition of others leads to the “politics of difference” (p.39) that results in conflicts.

In the need to recognize differences, Taylor notes that “Western liberal societies” are “supremely guilty” of the marginalization of segments of their populations that stem from other cultures (Taylor, 1994, p.63). He advocates that, among other things, there needs to be recognition of “equal respect,” “equal dignity” and “equal value of different cultures; that we not only let them [different cultures] survive, but acknowledge their worth” (p.63-64).

Consequently, in order to achieve “public recognition of our identity” based on Taylor’s “dialogical” model of identity, Gutmann in her introduction to Taylor’s (1994) book reiterates Taylor’s views that room must be left for public deliberations of “aspects of our identities that we share, or potentially share with other citizens” (Taylor, 1994, p.7).

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Different cultural views of the same social situation pervade our lives in a complex society. Sometimes these do not seriously affect the social interactions that occur and may even facilitate them. At other times, the diversity of cultural knowledge leads to misunderstanding and conflict...understanding cultural differences is an important priority. (Spradley & McCurdy, 1972, p. 31.)

Although there has been acknowledgment of concerns on the part of immigrant parents as to their children's placements in ESL programs, there has been no empirical study of the recent influx of Taiwanese immigrants to Canada whose children comprise a large majority in certain ESL classrooms. The purpose of this study, as noted above, is to investigate qualitatively the perceptions of Taiwanese parents and their adolescent children in regard to the schooling of the participant children in Taiwan and Canada.

As in other fields, researchers in second language acquisition refer to qualitative research as being primarily concerned with identifying the presence or absence of a particular thing and "determining its nature and distinguishing features" (Watson-Gegeo, 1988). It is contrasted to quantitative research which is based on a notion of a reality that is fixed, where knowledge consists of explanations and predictions, and where research designs are deductive, verificative and enumerative (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). Qualitative research concerned with second language acquisition includes a range of approaches, such as naturalistic inquiry, longitudinal case studies, educational ethnography, the ethnography of communication, discourse analysis, and other approaches employing qualitative methods (Johnson & Saville-Troike, 1992).

Aiming to illuminate the cultural phenomenon of the views of Taiwanese parents and their children toward schooling and ESL learning, this study follows a qualitative design with an ethnographic approach. The ethnographic approach differs from other forms of qualitative

research in its concern with holism and its treatment of culture as integral to the analysis, and not just one of many factors to take into consideration (Watson-Gegeo, 1988). Readers should note that this study is not an ethnography of the Taiwanese immigrants.

This study applies the ethnographic approach to examine, explore, and to understand what the Taiwanese immigrants say and do in a given context and across contexts (between Canada and Taiwan) as that occurs naturally in a “noncontrived situation[s] with no manipulation of conditions or experience” (Hornberger, 1994; McMillan & Schumacher, 1993).

3.1 Ethnographic Research Methods (Ethnographic Techniques)

The term “ethnography,” with its origins in anthropological studies, is defined in several ways by anthropologists and sociologists. In a naturalistic discovery-orientation “ethnography always implies a theory of culture” where the essential core is “the concern with the meaning of actions and events to the people we seek to understand” (Spradley, 1980, p.5). According to Spradley (1980), the “meaning(s)” or “interpretations” are conveyed through listening to speech messages, and through observations of cultural inferences such as cultural behavior and cultural artifacts (p.10). Ethnographers believe that reality is a “social construction” in which people, through their own perceptions and belief systems, ascribe meaning to events, persons or objects in order to organize their behaviors, and to understand themselves and others (Spradley, 1980; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Schumacher & McMillan, 1993).

Ethnography starts with a conscious attitude of open-mindedness and to the extent possible, “empty-mindedness.” “Empty-mindedness” is not to be confused with “ignorance and naiveté” concerning one’s field of research. (Hymes, 1982, p.24). The responsibility of an ethnographer is to be well-informed and to provide a systematic knowledge of what is

known so far about the subject, but not to allow that background to unduly influence what the ethnographer sees and hears. "Empty-mindedness" means to retain receptivity.

The essence of the ethnographic method (as applied to education as well) is inductive, dialectical, open-ended, subject to self-correction during the process of inquiry itself, and of emergent design that builds abstractions from the particular social constructions that have been gathered (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Hymes, 1982; Wilson, 1977; Schumacher & McMillan, 1993). According to Hymes (1982), the ethnographic method unites three aspects of inquiry that are essential ingredients of anthropological research proper: contrastive insight, the seeking of specific information and general interpretation (p.23).

This study of Taiwanese immigrants specifically follows those three aspects of inquiry identified by Hymes (1982). The contrastive insight involves two primary folds, 1) the parents' and their children's perspectives, and 2) the "culture" of educational systems of Taiwan and Canada. The process of seeking specific information and general interpretation are dialectical in nature. As discourse events unfold during fieldwork, interpretations and descriptions occur, but change continually throughout and after the fieldwork as more depth of information is gathered.

The system of ethnographic analysis is grounded in the emic-etic principle. Pike (1965, cited in Hymes, 1982) distinguishes etic as the "general framework with which one begins analysis of a given case" and "the reconsideration of the general framework in the light of the analysis." In other words, for this study, the frameworks such as the "language socialization framework" (Ochs, 1988, 1993) and "reflective teaching (thinking) framework" (Richards & Lockhart, 1994) employed as the macro-analytical concepts for comparative research across languages, settings and cultures, follow the "etic" principle. "Emic," on the other hand, is the analysis of the "actual system" (Hymes, 1982) from "culturally based

perspectives, interpretations, and categories used by members of the group under study to conceptualize and encode knowledge and to guide their own behavior” (Watson-Gegeo, 1988, p.580). The “emic” perspective involves the “insiders’” views. This study of Taiwanese parents and adolescents emphasizes the “emic” concept in using the descriptive language the participants themselves use to express their perspectives and interpretations of behavior, events, and situations. The “emic” theory and data collection following it allows “the potential for new, unexpected, and unpredictable understandings to emerge” (Hornberger, 1994).

3.2 Verification (Credibility & Transferability)

There has been much discussion among researchers as to what standards of evaluation are to be employed in judging the adequacy of a qualitative-ethnographic research. Some ethnographers counter criticisms from other scholars that ethnographic research is unreliable and lacking validity and generalizability by stating that ethnography’s goals are descriptive and generative. However, other ethnographers have codified evaluative techniques comprehensible across research disciplines that would address the credibility of their findings (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984.) Understanding that there have been extensive debates as to which criteria should be used in judging a particular study, (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, Goetz & LeCompte, 1984), in this chapter, I will only discuss the criteria most relevant for considering the “trustworthiness” of this study. Those criteria are 1) validity, 2) reliability, 3) internal validity, 4) transferability and 5) credibility - triangulation. These concepts and their interrelationship are described briefly below.

3.2.1 Validity

In qualitative research, judgements of validity focus primarily on: 1) the extent to which interpretation of findings adequately account for observations relevant to contextual

factors 2) minimization of potential research bias and 3) provision of coherent explanations and discussions within a larger theoretical frame (Johnson & Saville-Troike, 1992). The second language acquisition (SLA) researchers further note that it is important to emphasize that “validity in either quantitative or qualitative research is not an absolute notion nor can validity be ‘proven’. Rather, a high level of validity is a goal to strive for” (Johnson & Saville-Troike, 1992, p.603).

3.2.2 Reliability

Reliability is defined as the extent to which “independent researchers could discover the same phenomena and to which there is agreement on the description of the phenomena between the researcher and participants” (Schumacher & McMillan, 1993). In quantitative research, the degree of reliability depends on the credibility and validity of results.

Credibility refers to the extent to which the results approximate reality and are judged to be trustworthy and reasonable. Credibility is enhanced when the research design takes into account potential sources of bias that may distort the findings. (p.157) Tests for reliability of results depend on stability, consistency, predictability and demonstrated replication where two conditions yield similar findings (Davis, 1992).

In qualitative research, reliability is seen in terms of the inquirer’s attempt to ensure that findings are dependable, by way of the cyclical formulation of hypotheses through multiple methods such as triangulation, peer debriefing, member checks, and inquiry audit (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, Davis, 1992). Many researchers have cautioned researchers to be aware of neglecting the reliability factor in their qualitative research, allowing the data to become suspect because of nonrandom or unexplained sampling, or the validity of interpretation becoming suspect due to possible observer bias and observer effect (Kirk & Miller, 1986; Johnson & Saville-Troike 1992; Goetze & LeCompte, 1984). Schumacher &

McMillan (1993) and Johnson & Saville-Troike (1992) advocate that ethnographic researchers should promote reliability in their design by making “explicit” such aspects as: researcher role and qualifications (including depth of involvement and training), informant selection, social context, data collection and analysis strategies, and analytical premises (theoretical frameworks).

3.2.3 Internal validity

Internal validity of qualitative designs is “the degree to which the interpretations and concepts have mutual meanings between the participants and researcher.” Ethnographic research claims high internal validity through its data collection and analysis techniques. (Schumacher & McMillan, 1993, p.391.) Internal validity involves strategies such as lengthy data collection time, use of informant’s language, participant-observation and in-depth interviews in the “field,” “disciplined subjectivity” and self-monitoring for researcher’s over subjectivity (p.392). This study follows those guidelines.

3.2.4 Transferability

External validity or generalizability in ethnographic studies is usually referred to as comparability and translatability (Goetze & LeCompte, 1984), or transferability (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Davis, 1992) of the findings. Transferability is always relative and depends on how much overlap or matching there are between the salient conditions in the situations studied and the situations to which those conditions are compared. In order to establish the degree of transferability, a researcher must first demonstrate through “thick description” sufficient details of a phenomenon so that the reader may decipher if transfer or comparison to relevant dimensions to other phenomena can be considered. Furthermore, in the naturalistic inquiry, one must bear in mind that what one deems the salient conditions of a particular situation that can be declared as transferable, constitute only a “working

hypothesis” and may be liable to disconfirmation or become insignificant, even in the same context, at a later period of time as the researcher learns more (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

3.2.5 Credibility -Triangulation

Triangulation or the “multiple-strategy” approach, is used by a researcher as a means of “quality control”, to regard his or her own material critically, to test it, to identify its weaknesses, to see if similar patterns recur and to identify areas for further inquiry (Fielding & Fielding, 1986). It is a means by which the researcher may increase self-confidence if diverse kinds of data support the same conclusion, and gain credibility in “an attempt to relate different sorts of data in such a way as to counteract various possible threats to the validity of [the] analysis” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p.232). The researcher’s confidence is only well founded to the extent that the different kinds of data may reveal different types of discrepancy.

There are a number of triangulation methods for cross-validation such as data source triangulation, data-collection strategies, triangulating between different researchers, time-period influences and theoretical schemes triangulations (Denzin, 1978; Fielding & Fielding, 1986; Goetz & LeCompte, 1984; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). This study recognizes that there are many variants in the triangulation method as delineated by various authorities in qualitative research using their own systems of triangulation. This study will employ an “eclectic” or “multimodal” research method where particular variants of “triangulation” will be used in data sources comparisons, team researchers and data-collection strategies. Although the practical applications of the triangulation process as it relates to this study will be presented in detail in the “Procedures” section of this chapter, the following sections will briefly introduce the principles and relevance of the triangulation techniques used in this study.

The data sources technique of triangulation involves “respondent validation” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995), which uses “comparisons of data relating to the same phenomenon but deriving from different phases of the fieldwork” (p.230). In other words, the accounts of different participants - the Taiwanese parents and, in turn, their children (including comments from the “mutual friend/local resource” present on site) - are recorded separately (parents separated from their children, and each family separated from the other family) and at different times during the research. This respondent validation also gives added depth of description of the social meanings involved in a situation.

The data-collection strategies specifically involve use of “within-method” (Fielding & Fielding, 1986, p.25), where the same method is used on different subjects. In this study, the same interview format was applied to each of the parents and, in turn, their children, to seek a relation of accounts, to formulate and test emerging hypotheses (patterns) about schooling in Taiwan and schooling and language learning in Canada.

In the triangulation between different researchers, this study used a “local resource” in the interviewing process, as well as team researchers’ input for the data analysis phases. During the interviews with the parents, a mutually trusted “friend” of both the researcher and the participant(s) aided in soliciting “rich” description from the sometime reluctant parent. Following the interviews, the “friend” clarified and added her perceptions and interpretations of the participant’s accounts based on her cross-cultural “personal expertise.” The team researchers included members of a research team from a Language Education department of a prominent Canadian university whose research on the theme of “multicultural, multilingual high school learning community” at the same site often overlapped, and included comments from Taiwanese participants similar to this study’s sample. The opportunities for weekly discussions of data generated by different observers on different constituents of the schooling

experience (learning styles, teaching styles, parent-teacher interactions, extracurricular tutoring) provided complementary information as well as triangulation of data across the schooling contexts.

However, it is important to note, that although in applying triangulation methods, links between concepts and indicators are checked by recourse to other indicators, researchers have cautioned, and this study recognizes, that even if results tally, this provides no guarantee that the inferences involved are correct. Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) provide valuable insight when they comment: “one should not...adopt a naively ‘optimistic’ view that the aggregation of data from different sources will unproblematically add up to produce a more complete picture.... Differences between sets or types of data may be just as important and illuminating” (p.232).

Relevant to the present study, the critical elements for consideration of validity, reliability, credibility and transferability in qualitative research described above will be demonstrated in the following sections setting out procedure observed in the study itself.

3.3 Context

For ethical considerations, to ensure confidentiality and to protect privacy, this study uses pseudonyms for the research site and all participants (parents, students, resource people), as well as names or revealing terminologies which may appear in the participant’s accounts. All interviews, observations and materials obtained in this research have been conducted and received pursuant to written informed consent from the participant involved.

3.4 Research Location

This study is one constituent part of an overall research project centered on “multicultural, multilingual high school learning community.” The research project consisted of a researcher team working under the auspices of a municipal school board, the members of

which examined particular aspects of the “educational experience” of English as second language learners at a public secondary school site in British Columbia. Those aspects involved three environments: 1) within the ESL classroom: language socialization through group projects and cooperative learning in the multilevel classrooms, 2) between the school and the home: parent-teacher nights in the ESL program, and 3) the home environment: the content of this study.

The secondary school shall be referred to as ET. ET is an urban neighborhood school located in a quiet, middle to upper-middle class area in an affluent central district of a major metropolis in British Columbia. The school is in a neighbourhood catchment area whose inhabitants had been historically predominantly “Caucasian” and in mixed professions. Within the last fifteen years the population has rapidly changed to include a majority of well to do “Asians” or more precisely, Hong Kong or Taiwanese families.

ET is a relatively large secondary school with around 1700 students from grade 8 to grade 12. The school takes pride in its high academic standing, and music, drama and athletic achievements. At the outset of the research at ET in 1994, the school reported that 38% of the school population speak English as their home language and 62% of the students speak a language other than English at home. In September, 1996, a school counselor reported that 61% of all students speak a language other than English at home. Of those, 84% speak Chinese (Mandarin, Taiwanese or Cantonese) at home, with the rest speaking Japanese or Korean. 39% of all students speak English at home.

In 1994 -1995 the school had 9 ESL classes where students were grouped on a multi-level basis with a mix of different English proficiency and grade levels. Upon arrival in the school system all the ESL students had been tested for their level of English proficiency at the school board’s “Reception Centre” (a center established by the school board to provide

orientation and expedite the placement of newly arrived immigrant students into appropriate schools). According to ET's "multi-level ESL program" report (1994), the multi-level groupings are set through random assignments of students by the school's computer to ESL classes (except in the case of ESL Reading and Literature). Aside from physical education and math courses, which were offered in the mainstream classes, the students generally followed a two year multi-level program of: ESL science, ESL Social Studies, ESL Family Studies, ESL Oral and ESL Composition/Process Writing. ESL Reading/Literature classes are separated into two homogeneous levels. The ESL students can move into mainstream classes at any time during the school year depending on the student's progress and availability of space in the mainstream classes.

3.5 Gaining Access & Researcher's Role

3.5.1 School

I began my research at ET in October 1994 when my research team and I were invited to attend a monthly ESL Department Project meeting chaired by a senior administrator of the local school board. The generally open and friendly environment of the meetings allowed me to become well acquainted with the ET ESL teachers, as well as the administrators at the school board. My first personal interaction with some of the teachers was after one of the meetings, when two teachers approached to ask me to help them write a letter addressed to the Taiwanese parents who were a majority of the school's ESL parents at that time. The letter's purpose was to sensitively and delicately convey a reminder message, with exemplary heartfelt quotes from some of the attending ESL students, regarding the value of parent night and subtly stating to those parents absent from parent night the disappointment of their children and the valuable missed opportunity to understand their children and their school. Consequently, two teachers and I spent an evening together working out a letter intended for

the Chinese parents. After that, I oversaw the translation of the letter into Chinese. This collaborative and friendly experience initiated my personal participation in the ESL department, especially as a parent-teacher liaison. At the monthly meetings, the teachers extended open invitations to me to visit and observe their classes.

3.5.2 Home and “Mutual Friend”

The Taiwanese community in the British Columbia metropolis is generally tightly-knit and has its own extensively organized systems that cater to the local Taiwanese, ranging from restaurants, food markets, stores, schools, cultural societies, Buddhist temples and churches to associations for seniors, health professionals, women, youth, businesses, environmentalists, etc. Most of the recent Taiwanese immigrants are comfortable revolving in the Taiwanese “circles” where all of their everyday and social needs are met. The majority of recent Taiwanese immigrants live within their own circle of friends and associations. In the last ten years and especially within the last five years, the researcher, a Taiwanese-Canadian, has been a “participant” in the local Taiwanese community, engaging as a volunteer in Taiwanese community events.

It is generally acknowledged fact that it is very often very difficult for anyone acting in an “official” capacity to gain access to and “trust” from the Taiwanese, due to the culturally “closed” nature of the community and the individuals, especially in regard to sharing their private views. This phenomenon held for this study. As a result, for this study, families were chosen by the researcher based on their availability and willingness to consent to interviews of the parent(s) and their teenage children. For purposes of the broader research team project, families had to have adolescents who have attended or were attending the ESL program at the designated secondary school.

Needless to say, the final array of families with its participants of eight mothers, three fathers and eleven secondary school children came about through much trial and error at various stages of contact with the parents. Initial selections for the participants included fourteen families whose names were provided by the ET Chinese parents council or by established members of the local Taiwanese society. However, after many phone calls, only four families consented to meet me and allow me to tape-record and interview their children. After that, 1 family of the four dropped out because their adolescent child refused to be interviewed. Wishing to obtain more families, I spent much time and effort at the Taiwanese cultural center, where I volunteered to talk to members at meetings about their concerns about education and ESL education in local public schools and tried to establish rapport with possible participants. I visited ESL classes and parent get-togethers at the local Taiwanese center to talk about my work.

After many months of no results, just as I was having second thoughts about the feasibility of the study, a close family member with a rather prominent and respected status in the Taiwanese community, introduced me to her good friend, Margaret. Margaret was a recent immigrant whose teenage son was in a private school, and whose circle of close friends included many parents from ET. Margaret gladly offered to set up interviews with her friends and accompany me to the interviews. I was very thankful and felt much relieved. Margaret managed to set up six interviews with friends who had adolescents at ET. Of the six families, I successfully interviewed five families, one family dropping out due to their adolescent transferring to a private school. Thus, my final participants totaled eight families: eight mothers, three fathers, three daughters and eight sons. The composition of the families included varied combinations of one or two parents and male or female children.

Margaret's role then became a "trusted mutual friend" who acted as a go-between at introductions and throughout the interviews, at which she translated or clarified discussion points should either the parents or I get stuck. Margaret also became my "resource" and "co-observer" before, during and after the interviews. When we were alone afterwards, she would explain and debrief some of the information gathered in the interviews. Margaret provided me with many colloquial translations and considerable insight into the comments of the parents.

The home visits and interviews usually began with initial "proper" introductions of all parties done by the mutual friend in Taiwanese or Mandarin. Protocol required giving information about the researcher's family and affiliations, cultural and professional background and explanations of the value of the information to be gathered and the usefulness of such information as advice to future immigrants. Margaret always introduced me to her friends as a member of the Taiwanese community with a position at the local university and, by having Margaret as our mutually trusted friend, I was warmly welcomed into the Taiwanese parents' homes.

3.5.3 Parents

Margaret and I were invited by the parents to conduct the interview in their living or dining rooms. The interviews had either one or both of the parents present. They took place much in the form of a social visit, where there was much talk between a customary ritual of serving tea or coffee with various Taiwanese snacks. The atmosphere of the interviews was greatly lightened by the presence of the mutual friend and interviews were usually preceded, punctuated or ended with bits of social "chit chat" between all the participants, including the researcher. It was evident that the more social chit chat that occurred throughout the visit, the more the parents opened up and were willing to elaborate on their personal views toward

issues relating to this study. Thus each interview session with the parents amounted to over two or three hours.

The 11 parents interviewed, all within the age range of forty-one to forty-six, were married and had Canadian entrepreneur, investor or independent immigrant status.¹ All eight families would be considered middle to upper-middle in the Canadian context. One father had a graduate degree, one father and three mothers had undergraduate degrees, one father and three mothers had vocational degrees, one mother had a junior college degree and one had a high school qualification. In Taiwan, five of the families had their own businesses in which one or both of the spouses worked. One of the families ran a clinic where the husband was the doctor and the wife was the nurse. One mother was a high school teacher and three mothers were housewives. None of the parents worked in Canada at the time of the interviews, although two mothers were active volunteers in the local Taiwanese center. (See Figure 3.1.)

In all eight families, the father or the mother took turns being in Canada for short lengths of time and returning to Taiwan to keep up their professional careers or run their businesses. As to who would spend more time in Canada with the children, it seems, except for one case where the mother spent more time in Taiwan to supervise her company and the father is the “house father” in Canada, the fathers commuted more often to Taiwan. These types of families are often referred to by sociologists as “Astronaut” families, referring to the frequent “flying” nature of the parents. Depending on the family, the father and mother usually arrange a period, especially during holidays such as Christmas and New Years, Chinese New Years, or the children’s Spring Break, when both are together with their

¹ Entrepreneur immigration status, Investor immigration status and Independent immigration status are all status categories based on financial standing according to Canadian immigration law.

FIGURE 3.1
Background of the Taiwanese Parents in the Study
 Languages spoken at home: Mandarin and/or Taiwanese

Parents	Age	Immigrant Status			Education				Occupation			
		Entrepreneur	Investor	Independent	High School	Vocational	Jr. College	Undergraduate	Graduate	House Parent	Professional	Business
Total=11	41-46											
Father	3	3	4	1		1		2			1	2
Mother	8	3	4	1	1	3	1	3		3	2	3

FIGURE 3.2
Background of the Taiwanese Students in the Study
 Languages spoken at home: Mandarin and/or Taiwanese, and some English

Students	Age	Arrival in Canada			Taiwan Grade Average		Present Grade Average	
		Prior to Jr. High	During Jr. High	After Jr. High	Average	Above Average	Average	Above Average
Total =13	13-18							
Boys	9	3	5	2	3	6	5	3
Girls	4		1	3		4		4

children in Canada. During the long summer vacation in Canada, the mothers tend to return to Taiwan with the children to be together with the father.

All the parents spoke Taiwanese as their native language and Mandarin as their educated language. None of the parents felt comfortable speaking in English, although many used some appropriate English words here and there throughout the interviews.

3.5.4 Students

There were thirteen adolescents interviewed, nine boys and four girls from thirteen to eighteen years of age. Three of the boys came to Canada prior to junior high school, five during junior high school and two after junior high school. Of the girls, one came to Canada during junior high and three during high school. Four of the boys had average grades and six had above average grades in Taiwan. After coming to Canada, five of the boys had average grades and three had above average grades. All the four girls had above average grades in Taiwan and in Canada (see Figure 3.2).

The students, who had attended secondary schools in Taiwan, all described their every day school routines as beginning from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. each day, except Saturdays when there was half a day of school. Usually the students stay after school for an extra period of practice test taking and then go home to do homework and/or go to after school classes, also known as cram schools from 6 to 9 p.m., two to three times a week. In essence, including school and after school hours, the students study an average of over ten hours a day on school days. However, when national entrance exams near, the students add an additional three to five hours of study each day and on Sundays.

In Canada, these students, like other secondary school children in British Columbia, have classes from around 8:30 - 3:00, Mondays through Fridays. For after school activities, some of the boys noted that they usually join their peers in playing basketball; one boy noted

that he played ice hockey and many mentioned playing computer games. Some of the girls went home to read, watch TV or play computer games.

The children's Canadian ESL class experiences ranged from six months to three years. 4 of the students were still in mostly ESL classes, 5 students were in some transitional ESL classes (the highest level ESL class before mainstream), and four students had moved entirely into mainstream classes from the ESL program.

The children all spoke Mandarin with their siblings at home and some spoke Taiwanese with their parents and relatives occasionally.

3.5.5 Community Resources

In ethnography...data and interpretation evolve together, each informing the other. Additional data provide illustration, test the adequacy of the developing account, and suggest avenues for further inquiry. (Wolcott, p.189)

In order to gather more comprehensive background information about recent Taiwanese immigrants and how to gain better access to them, I met and chatted with a few established members of the Taiwanese community on several occasions prior to, during and after my interviews with the participants. One of the Taiwanese community resource people was Dr. Liu, who came to British Columbia recently and was widely acknowledged as an expert of the local Taiwanese community. Having experienced similar situations as the participant parents as well as being in contact with immigrants daily at the community center, Dr. Liu spent many hours chatting with me at the center about the new immigrants, their motives for emigrating, ways of thinking, values, priorities and cultural behaviors. Furthermore, several other Taiwanese community members as well as seniors who, having known me through my volunteer work at the center, invited my family and me to their homes to share a meal, to chat about their lives in Canada and reminisce about Taiwan, giving me rich insights into some immigrants lives in Canada.

At this point in this chapter, I must remind readers of the difficulties of being in a role of a researcher as well as a trusted confidant. Although an ethnographic researcher tries to maintain the goal of being an impartial observer, it is often challenging. One of the reasons is due to the trust, privilege and closeness that a researcher gains in getting access to gather valid knowledge of meanings from the participants. Though trying to stay impartial, a compassionate researcher often cannot help being caught in the emotions of the participant's situation such as feeling their pains, conflicts, anxieties, elation, etc. However, the researcher acknowledges that good ethnography entails becoming an insider, while at the same time establishing and maintaining one's neutrality (Wilson, 1970).

3.6 Procedure

In the following discussion of the procedures of data collection, involving fieldwork and interpretation, one should understand that the processes which took place were often concurrent and dialectic rather than sequential and linear (Wolcott, 1985).

3.6.1 Questionnaire

For the purpose of gathering background information on the parents, a one-page questionnaire in English and Chinese was distributed and completed by each parent participant. The questions included basic information on the child(ren) in ET, and informant information such as age, status, education, occupation in Taiwan and Canada, immigrant status, reason for moving, length of stay and goals for children in the future (see Appendix A).

The questionnaire underwent several changes before and during the initial stages of the pilot study, with suggestions from Mr. Liu, who had previous experience conducting a survey in the Taiwanese community. With some fine tuning of the questions and the advice

to give the questionnaire to the parents at the end the interview after “trust” had been established, all the participants readily answered the questionnaires.

3.6.2 Interviews

The interview procedures in this study follow the ethnographic methods of semi-structured interviews illustrated in such studies as Constatino, et al. (1995) and Ghuman and Wong (1989) on Chinese parents and education. This study used an interview guide with open-ended questions to allow for individual responses within broad categories such as education systems comparisons, the child’s education progress and ESL progress and advice to future immigrants (see Appendix B).

Aside from the fluid and flexible nature of questions precipitated by the comments of participants during interviews, the “guide” questions designed for this study also underwent several changes before and throughout the interviews. A notable change occurred during the pilot study after Mr. Liu of the Taiwan center spent several hours going over in detail each of my interview questions, clarifying, rephrasing and retranslating my questions into colloquial Taiwanese Mandarin. Mr. Liu made an invaluable comment:

I understand your questions in English, but if I were a parent, I wouldn’t know how to answer some of the questions because they just don’t make sense within the educational context that they are coming from. For example, when you ask about what they think of the educational progress of their children in Taiwan, they’ll probably be asking you what you mean because they can only relate to educational progress in terms of test scores or grades.

The interviews with the parents, each lasting two to three hours, were all conducted in the homes of the participants at the parent’s invitation. Although the parents were given a choice of English, Mandarin or Taiwanese, all the parents spoke in Mandarin and/or Taiwanese.

Upon the consent of the parents and their children, interviews with the adolescents were conducted either at the home of the participant or in the school library, or a classroom,

depending on the choice of the child(ren). Each interview usually lasted from thirty minutes to one hour depending on whether there was one student interviewed alone or two interviewed together. Given a choice, the children spoke Mandarin most of the time, interspersed with English and occasionally Taiwanese.

Although it was the original intention to interview all participants (parents and children) separately, the format changed when wives and husbands were present together and wanted to be interviewed together. In cases where there was more than one child attending ET, the siblings also requested to be interviewed together. The researcher gave much consideration to weighing the advantages and disadvantages of group interviewing versus individual interviewing, especially in light of the complexities of the dynamics and personal relationships among the Taiwanese participants as well as the researcher. For example: in the case of husbands and wives or siblings, when my request to interview each separately was countered with a request that the participants involved be interviewed together, I felt it necessary to abide by such requests in order to set the participants at ease and begin the initial bonding between the researcher and the interviewee(s). Furthermore, during parent interviews, if the other spouse was present and didn't show signs of willingness to let the other spouse be interviewed alone, then the researcher felt it was best to include both parents in the interview. Thus in order not to create feelings of animosity, and for the purpose of establishing a good and trusting relationship, I decided to respect the wishes of the interviewees (Mishler, 1986, Seidman, 1991).

With the consent of the participant parent(s) and the adolescents, all the sessions were tape-recorded, with field notes taken during the interviews.

3.7 Data Analysis

3.7.1 Theoretical Framework

The data analysis of this study follows the general framework of account analysis as set out by Harré (1993). Some social psychologists include account analysis under discourse analysis (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). Harré, however, separates the two kinds of discourse commenting, “there is that with which social acts are accomplished and there is that with which we comment upon and theorize about those social acts” (p.117). “Accounts” are discourses of the latter description. According to Harré “accounts” or “accounting” is a “discursive practice, almost always accomplished directly with words.... accounts have a key role in both social action and social psychology” (p.121). Thus verbal accounting or a “conversation” and for that matter, an “interview” such as those conducted in this study, provide explicit rules and conventions for acting correctly and are evidence of the “cultural knowledge of an activity” (Mohan, et al., 1997). Since this ethnographic research draws on the “emic” principles, it depends on the “accounts” of the parents and their children to explicitly reveal and interpret the practice of activities such as schooling and learning ESL in the Taiwanese or Canadian cultural and educational settings.

3.7.1.2 Social Representation versus Individual Differences

Spradley (1980) defines culture as “the acquired knowledge people use to interpret experience and generate behavior... It is a shared system of meanings, is learned, revised, maintained, and defined in the context of people interacting” (pp.6-9). Consequently, people’s behaviors are cultural and steeped in “cultural knowledge”, with acquired cultural principles for acting and interpreting within their particular communities or social systems. With this understanding, the views of the Taiwanese parents and their children in this study are generally considered for the social representation of the Taiwanese immigrant’s point of

view rather than the individuals between families. One may assume that the “accounts” data analysis of the individual Taiwanese participants reveals a pattern of “social reality” and “social system” common to recent Taiwanese immigrants. As Thommen, von Cranach & Ammann (1992) stress in their theory, the individual is neither “an isolated fighter” nor “a marionette at the strings of the social system.” “Individual action is steered by social cognitions which come from the social representations of the social system” (p.200).

3.7.2 Analysis

Since the majority of the interviews took place in Mandarin and Taiwanese, all non-English data was initially translated into English, and transcribed in English at the same time by the researcher. The purpose of the translations and transcriptions was to record accurate meaning and find emerging and recurring patterns across the interviews. It was not a concern for the researcher to record the translations and transcriptions utterance by utterance.

The data in this study, as in any semi-structured ethnographic study, contains topics that overlap and comments (brief or long) laden with rich explicit and implicit meanings.

With the primary aim of seeking patterns that may emerge from the data, this study followed Spradley’s (1980) system of “domain” analysis. Domains are “cover terms” or large cultural categories that contain “included terms” or smaller categories, and whose relationship are linked by a “single semantic relationship” (pp.88-89). In this study, domain analysis, the cover terms or the large category, is used to search, classify and examine some of the primary categories of perceptions and concerns of the parents and their adolescents on schooling in Taiwan and Canada. Secondly, after establishing some of the cover terms, the data will be combed for smaller categories or “included terms,” some of which may be hidden or obscured in the accounts. These smaller categories will be sorted out and matched to appropriate “cover terms.” Thirdly, a single semantic relationship tying the smaller

categories (included terms) to the large category (cover terms) will be extracted and clarified.

It is important to note that the three steps of domain analysis mentioned are interchangeable and may happen concurrently. Furthermore, the process of analysis can be concurrent as well as subsequent to data collection.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

4.1 Background Data about the Parents and their Children

The study took place during a two-year period and involved eight Taiwanese families who immigrated to British Columbia within the previous seven years. To portray a demographic reflecting the economic status and educational background of a majority of recent Taiwanese immigrants', four of the families interviewed were of the Investor immigration category, three were of the Entrepreneur and one was of Independent status. The families were interviewed on the basis of their affiliation with a particular local secondary school as a part of a larger investigation into the high school community as a learning organization.

4.1.2 Family Situation

The eleven parents interviewed were between the ages of forty-one and forty-seven. Amongst them, ten had received post-secondary education (vocational college, junior college or university) while one had high school education only. One mother had been a high school teacher in Taiwan while the rest of the parents had their own businesses in Taiwan. All of the families still maintain their own businesses in Taiwan and none of the parents had a paying job in Canada. Two mothers were active volunteers in the local Taiwanese cultural society while the other parents were "house parents." The parents live with their children in well-to-do neighbourhoods of single house dwellings within the high school catchment area.

Although I was able to interview three families when both the father and mother were present at the same time, all the parents indicated that they were together only part of the time in British Columbia with their spouses and their children as a whole family. Seven families mentioned that the fathers commute between Taiwan and Canada (e.g. once every other

month or during holidays) while the mother stays with the children most of the time in Canada, going back to Taiwan once or twice a year. One family stated that the father and the mother divided their stays in Taiwan and Canada equally and alternated their trips back and forth spending a few weeks in between in Canada as a family together. The reason given for the commuting was because of the need for the parent(s) to supervise their businesses in Taiwan. In all cases, the families had one or two parents living with their children at any given time.

4.1.3 Children

The children of the eight families, eight boys and three girls between the ages of fourteen and sixteen, were interviewed separately after school either at their school or their homes. The children had all received elementary education and experienced at least one year of secondary school in Taiwan. At the time of the interviews their grade levels ranged from grade 9 to grade 11. Given a choice, all the siblings wanted to be interviewed together with their siblings. The children interviewed with their siblings talked much more in each other's company and in their own language (Mandarin and Taiwanese) than those who had no siblings, who were quite abrupt with their answers. Furthermore, parts of the interviews where the children tried to use English (on their own accord) were much shallower in content than the sections where the children switched to Mandarin or Taiwanese.

The findings below will present parents' perspectives on education and experiences in Taiwan and British Columbia, as well as comments on the same topics from the secondary school students interviewed.

4.2 Style of Discussion

This study is the result of an enriched experience where the researcher had the privilege of entering the doors of a few immigrant families to share some significant

concerns of their current lives. Discussions of the findings to follow will attempt, where possible, to reflect the individual nature of the “parents’ stories” gathered and, hopefully, the parent behind each comment.

As the “story” from each parent or student is conveyed and embellished with each individual’s particular areas of concern, the reader will notice that there were many areas in the results where the topics did not meet and some common areas where shared concerns were expressed in different degrees. The presentation of the data aims to convey in a sequential manner the emergent range of “education immigration stories” of the families.

The quotations from parents and children illustrated in this section were taken for their relevance to the issue and not as a family’s (father, mother, child) comments and response to each other concerning the same topics. Quotations below for each issue may come from parents and children of different families to illustrate the broad scope of opinions from the eight families. It is not the focus of this study to deal with the family dynamics between the particular parent(s) and children interviewed, nor is it intended for the comments from each individual to be representative of the all the voices of recent Taiwanese immigrants.

Since the quotes were translated from Mandarin or Taiwanese to English, one should note that often the parents used “you” or “they” in place of “I” or “we” when speaking of their own experiences. Such second or third person transference is a common practice in the Taiwan culture.

4.3 Reasons for Leaving Taiwan

Although this type of information was not easy to obtain in the interviews,² all the parents in essence said they immigrated for the sake of their children’s education.

² See Chapter 3, Methodology Chapter for explanations of questions used in the interviews.

I feel that the recent immigrants come here for the sake of education of their kids. I feel that those that come out (of Taiwan) are those interested in higher education for their kids. (father)

I know that in our terms, the Taiwanese immigrants call Taiwanese immigration as 'education immigration'. We came here because of our children's education. (mother)

So, having kids at the public high schools in Taiwan is like murdering their talents. That's why I thought of sending my kids here. (father)

The adolescents also all answered with the same type of reasons as their parents.

My parents came because of education for us. They talked to us before that. (son)

My mother says it's so that we can have more chance to learn what we are interested in, and we don't have to learn more stuff that's not useful. Like here, you can choose whatever you want. (daughter)

They like me stay here because they have better education. (son)

4.4 Comments Underlying Academic Achievement in Taiwan

Some major factors that influenced the families to be "education immigrants" were organized into the following two categories:

4.4.1 Set Course in Education

The first category had to do with the lack of choice and its effects:

Parent

Taiwan's education is that they have already set your course for you. You must follow the course they set for you. (father)

I really want to stress that over there (Taiwan) there's such pressure for entering into the next grade. You must compete. There's no choice. Usually the classes finish about 4:30 but the teachers want to give them another hour (of tests). Many kids go home after 5:30 and immediately go the cram schools without even eating dinner. (mother)

Adolescents

In Taiwan they'll (teachers) plan for you. Like everyone have the same subject. Actually we didn't have any electives. We didn't have choice like (we have to take) the subjects we hate, we just can't switch to another one. (daughter)

In Taiwan you don't have time to think too much. I felt I was forced to study. (son)

4.4.2 Academic Achievement and Teachers

The second category consists of the constraints of the education system and the mandates of the teachers:

Parents

Both the schools and the students look at the students' grades only. This is the biggest weakness, so I brought my son out (to Canada). (father)

In Taiwan you have to take (entrance) exams, so the teachers most of the time teach for the purpose of (passing) those exams. (mother)

The teachers don't care about those (art, music, physical education) at all. They even use the time allotted to those subjects to give tests to the students. (father)

The students whose interviews touched upon this area of Taiwan education talked about their experience in terms of the "dependency" on texts and the "strictness" of the teachers.

The Chinese education system (makes the students) more dependent. Students in Taiwan are more dependent because they have all the reference textbooks and everything else so they can find the answers everywhere or they just have to memorize (the answers). (daughter)

The students respect the teachers in Taiwan a lot more than here. Here the students are fooling around in class even with the teachers. The teachers in Taiwan are too strict. They don't have a sense of humor and they lecture from the beginning to the end of class. (daughter)

4.5 Academic Achievement in Taiwan

The parents' perceptions of what contributes to academic achievement in Taiwan mostly fall into five major categories: 1) tests 2) marks 3) homework 4) punishment 5) parental support. In all five categories there are poignant underlying factors of influence such as pressure, motivation, habit, rules and caring which they believe formulate the success or failure of their teenagers' education both in Taiwan and Canada. The following are findings demonstrating such views.

4.5.1 Tests

The primary reoccurring topic of concern to all the parents was the importance of tests and test scores in Taiwan. Tests were often mentioned in association with the “pressure,” “motivation,” and “memorization” on the part of the students.

4.5.1.1 Tests and Pressure

The four types of pressure relating to tests were expressed in terms of a) parents exerting pressure on the school administration and teachers to give tests, b) parents themselves pressuring the children to study in order to pass tests, c) teacher pressuring students to study and excel by giving them tests and d) parents and teachers pressuring students.

a) Parents pressuring school and teachers

We parents all want our children to get into these No. 1 schools. So they put the pressure on the principals and the teachers and tell them to push their kids to take tests. Their kids must have high scores. (mother)

The parents put the pressure on the teachers too! There are the best high schools in _____. The parents all want their children to get into these #1 schools. So they put the pressure on the principals and the teachers and tell them to push their kids to take tests. Their kids must have high scores. (father)

b) Parents pressuring children

At _____, in each junior high, each class had 50 kids and if you get ranked as 40, 30 or 20 there's no way you can get into the No. 1 or No. 2. High School. So you have to pressure your kids to study. After school they have to study. (father)

Because in Taiwan everyone's comparing my child to their child. So we were doing the Taiwanese way of pushing our kids. (mother)

c) Teacher pressuring students

In Taiwan the teachers pressure the kids. We know immediately how they are doing by their test scores. (mother)

In Taiwan the teacher would push him everyday, lots of tests and homework. (mother)

d) Parents and teachers pressuring students

Parent

You (the student) have to memorize, memorize, memorize, otherwise you can't pass (the tests). (mother)

So the parent want to push the kids into a good class that would help them pass the entrance exams...It's because the teachers are stricter and the parents are more concerned (about their children) and so the environment of the class is better. (mother)

Comments by adolescents on the topic of "pressure" concerning their studies:

Pressure

Yes, there was lots of pressure. To me I think I can learn more not under pressure. I tend to do better on the subjects I like. (son)

The teachers now (in Canada) don't care if we study or not. They don't pressure us. We pressure ourselves. (daughter)

Tests

I hate the tests (in Taiwan) because sometimes they'll give you the same type of tests two or three times and mostly they test you on the same things. Then the tests are really boring. But the tests here (local) are not boring at all. (son)

We usually stay (at school) till 4 or 5 (p.m.). But my teacher would like us to stay after school. He would give some exams or tests. If you want to get good marks then you have to stay (after school). If you don't stay then the teacher would get very upset with you. (son)

4.5.2 Test Scores as Academic Determinant

Since entrance exam test scores determine a student's admission into high schools and post secondary institutions of particular national status, parents spoke of a student's academic assessment in Taiwan only in terms of their test scores in the academic core courses. The "test scores" or "marks" mentioned below may refer to daily practice tests, grade level entrance tests or to the final national entrance exams for the next level of education.

Parents

Taiwan's education system is that it turns the children into tools for producing good marks which will separate them (from the other students) according to degrees of competencies (by test marks). Both the school and the students only look at the student's grades and that's all. (father)

I feel that the public junior high schools now (in Taiwan) is that when you go up from your junior high to the high school, it's still at the same caliber of school. Especially in _____, there's a lot of pressure for entrance exams, a lot of competition (based on exam marks). In Taiwan if you just keep studying and memorizing then your test scores will probably be really good. Then you can enter a really good school. (mother)

On this topic, one student commented on marks as the determinant to one's obtaining a job in the future while another compared the difference in the administering of tests between Taiwan and Canada.

Adolescents

Like, people from Taiwan always judge themselves by marks. Marks can do anything...If you want to get a job you have to get a good mark first. Then after you graduate people will look at your marks and say, "oh, you got an A and you got a B. and we'll take the person who gets an A first. (daughter)

In Taiwan when we doing test, everyone (all the other classes) is doing the same test. But here the teacher give you test, they sometimes hard, sometimes other class get easier (test) and my class get more hard test. Some time the test mark is not fair here, I don't think. (son)

4.5.3 Homework, Cram Schools and Pressure

Having lived under the Taiwanese school system which funnels all academic endeavours into the purpose of passing entrance exams, the participants elaborated on their views toward the extracurricular "learning tools" such as homework and after school classes which were provided to enable students to keep up or excel in their schooling.

Parents

There's too much homework. There's too much pressure. They made him write and write exercises and then he'd come home with tons of homework. (mother)

When he was in the 'challenge' class it was good. The teaching style was closer to here. But he had so much homework. So when he got home he didn't have time to do anything else. I think that's bad for him. (mother)

When we see how much our kids were suffering from all that pressure (of going to cram schools after school) we felt awful too. But the kids see their friends were doing the same thing (going to cram schools) so they had to do that too. (mother)

Adolescent

I went to cram school after school. I went for math because my teacher forced us to go. In Taiwan the teachers go to cram school to teach so they made us go to the school

they are teaching in. If we go it's good for us because we're going to their school.
(son)

4.5.4 Punishment

With the rigorous demands of the classes and teachers, both the parents and their children talk about the constant need to control and "drive" the students to study at school and at home.

Parents

The Chinese say, "if you don't hit them, they don't get good grades". It's okay to hit them a little, not too hard. We feel that we need to punish the kids to some extent, we can't just not care about them. (father) "We need to scare them a little" (mother).

The teachers scold and hit the students. Yes, they loudly scold them and they also hit them...that's what we mean by a good class. The teacher is meaner and stricter... and the parents appreciate that more. (mother)

Adolescent

The teachers sometimes hit in Taiwan on the hand. I got hit and it hurt. But in normal classes in Taiwan they say you must get 100%. If you miss one mark you get one hit. If you miss twenty marks, you get twenty hits. (son)

The bad thing about Taiwan's education is that the teacher will hit you whenever they feel like it. They'd just slap you right across the face, even the girls. (son)

They use rattan sticks to hit the palm of the hand. But nowadays they only hit the boys not the girls. (son)

4.5.5 Parental Involvement

All of the parents spoke with much emotion and conviction of their role in their children's education and upbringing in Taiwan. The key factors discussed were: being able to understand their children's school work and what is expected of their children for homework and family values.

In Taiwan, of course I understand what they are writing (for their homework). I knew immediately when he was doing something wrong and I told him. (mother)

Usually we just sent them to cram school. We didn't know how to teach them (academically). (father)

The two of us didn't know how to teach our kids (academically). We didn't know how to help them with homework but we taught them about behavior, manners, attitude, morals, etc. (mother, father)

I feel that parental support is very important for our children (in Taiwan and Canada). I also feel that one doesn't have to outwardly teach family values. Just by our everyday conduct, expressions and body language is enough to let our kids learn about it. When some parents say what their family value teachings are, they are all lying. They are just saying words. Why, they are just sitting there playing their Mah Jiang and the kids are studying. Is that what you call teaching family values? If they never pick up a book to read and then they tell their kids to go read books, how can that work? (mother)

4.6 Comments Underlying Academic Achievement in Canada

When asked to reflect on their initial impressions of the education system, the parents and their adolescents spoke often in terms of comparisons with their previous experience in Taiwan. The underlying reasons behind their choice to move to Canada are organized into two major categories that essentially refer to the ideas of "individualism" and "liberation" through: a) choice of courses and type of teaching methods used and b) freedom as compared to Taiwan education.

4.6.1 Choice of Courses and Type of Teaching Methods

All parents mentioned the desire for their children to be given the opportunity to study for the sake of learning for themselves, to gain more confidence in themselves, and to proceed in the academic courses they are interested in. Many remarked on the experiential nature of the courses and their teachers.

Parents

I've researched about education system here. It tends to be more specialized, they tend to point the kids in a particular direction. For example, I feel that it's better for them if they have special interests and go in that particular direction. (mother)

The teaching method is good. They go on fieldtrips, go skating. They try to understand the students well. In Taiwan the teachers only care about test scores. Here the teachers care and understand the individual student, their personality. The teachers are very good in that way. (mother)

I feel that the Canadian education has a very good point. It lets the kids have a broader experience in their education. The other point is that it's more lively. (mother)

I feel that the education here strengthens the kid's individual decision making. This is a great point in the education here. So she feels that she knows what path she wants to take in the future. (mother)

Adolescent

You have more choices, you have to plan your own courses. (daughter)

Here they let you select courses, the ones you want to learn...I can take keyboarding or computer studies and I learn a lot more. It's much more useful for me in the future. In Taiwan the teachers decide what we'd take. (son)

Furthermore, with "choice" in education, the participants, especially the students, talked about their experience of thinking on their own and being heard.

4.6.2 Freedom to Speak in the Classroom

Parent

For E. he's more suitable for the education system here because he can outwardly express himself more.(father)

The teacher's talking or writing on board and he (son)'s behind talking with his friends. He makes the whole class laugh with his talk. (mother)

Adolescent

I feel free and I could speak out freely and it is much more relaxed here. It's not like Taiwan where there are so many tests. (son)

I was a shy student but when I came here I felt free, so I answered every single question the teacher asked. (son)

Here there's more free time to think of things that I've never thought of before. But it makes my marks drop. I gain more experience, like social experience. I learn more stuff like how to communicate with people...Here you learn things you are not going to learn in Taiwan. It's very different. (son)

When we first came here, it was easy but then it became hard because we had to depend on ourselves for many things. (daughter)

4.7 Academic Achievement in Canada

The topics that arose when parents talked about their children's academic advancement in Canada fell into the following categories of: "tests," "ESL progress, leveling

and exit”, “teachers giving homework and tests”, “study skills and punishment”, “parental involvement,” and the “future of their children.” The underlying poignant markers of “pressure,” “motivation,” “habit”, “rules,” “caring” and “home support” still reveal themselves as important considerations in parents’ comments.

4.7.1 Tests

Due to the parents’ familiarity with tests as the sole determinant for a student’s academic progress, parents spoke of the “testing” needed to track and verify their children’s ESL performance in terms of a) ESL exit tests, and b) regulating tests. Once more, they often refer to tests and the need for standardized testing as the means to pressure, motivate and target their children’s learning here.

4.7.1.1 ESL Exit Tests

(School) don’t give them tests to exit ESL. We have asked the principal to give tests but they won’t.... Now for them to get out of ESL they just have to write an essay and the regular (mainstream) teacher looks at it to see if that student can get out. (mother)

Summer vacations are very long and the students learn a lot during that time but the teachers don’t know because they are not given tests. ...The parent group is saying that there should be a test like TOEFL, 580 advanced, 600 out of ESL, not like the essay they have to write for the regular where the teacher just decides on a few that can come out (of ESL). It’s (tests) are very subjective. It should be more objective. We talked to the principal to please give our kids a test every two months. This gives kids encouragement. (mother)

I feel that as a Chinese it’s unfair when only the teacher gets to decide (when the kid goes into mainstream). For the teachers “speaking is more important than writing and reading. (mother)

The ESL students should be able to challenge (take challenge tests) being able to go into regular classes. (mother)

4.7.1.2 Regulating Tests

For example, (in Taiwan) the days of the (entrance) exams are set. Every year there are three set days for (national entrance) exams and that’s it. Every month at the end of the month there’s a test and everyone knows it. But here, it’s not like that. The teachers decide whenever they want to give a test. Very rarely are the days set (for

tests). So I feel that they still need to set rules for the students. You can't just leave them and they don't even know what they are studying for. (father)

Taiwanese kids like marks. They'll study for marks, tests, exams... (father)

Adolescent

The first time I had test here it was really bad. Basically it was because I wasn't used to the tests here. I didn't know what I should study for. Now, it's not bad at all. I am doing really well. I know what I need to study for but then I also understand more English. (son).

They don't give us tests in ESL, just book reports in literature course. We are now making a children's book. It's so useless. (son)

4.7.2 ESL Progress, Leveling and Exit

As progress in the children's overall academic achievement is the most significant concern of all the parents, rapid progress and exit from the ESL courses are spoken of as steps necessary toward reaching mainstream classes. The following quotes depict parents' dilemma between pressing their children to exit ESL courses quickly and, on the other hand, understanding somewhat the time it takes for their children to become proficient in academic English.

4.7.2.1 Child's Progress in ESL

I went to a parent meeting at school and when they tell us that it'd most likely take eight years for our kids to become academically competent in English, I thought, really, does it need to take that long? But then afterwards, I began to realize that it really does take that long. Because it seems like he is much better in his speaking, when he's talking to his friends, but then when it comes to doing homework and writing in formal English, he really needs over 5 years. (mother)

Everyday they (my children) have a tutor in the summer. The students have already been given their courses at the end of the year so the teachers don't know how much the students have improved in the summer. (mother)

4.7.2.2 Child's Progress and Self-Motivation

In the absence of the regimented education system and dealing with the aftermath of the previous "pressurized" academic environment such as Taiwan's, the following are reactions both from the parents and their adolescents about their present situations:

ESL level _ is too easy, too little homework, too little taught so she feels really relaxed, yeah, very happy. But then her English as a result has not been pushed (progressed). So when she is not pushed she learns less. She is not self-motivated. The Taiwanese way of teaching by external pressure needs to be brought to Canada. I think this is a very big problem and I can't change it around... (father)

In Taiwan the teachers keep putting pressure on the kids, but my kids come here and they are not serious about studying at all. When there's no pressure then they don't want to study. So every day they are doing this and that and then before they sleep they start to study. (mother)

Adolescents

The ESL courses are way easier than regular courses. (daughter)

In ESL you are more inclined to talk because your classmates are about the same level. (son).

They (ESL) don't have to teach us such elementary things. Even though our English is not good, our minds are not elementary level. (son)

4.7.2.3 Leveling of Classes

Not familiar with the structure of both the ESL system and the assessment or feedback methods from teachers and students, parents often expressed confusion with the multi-level groupings of the ESL system at the local school.

Parents

Then the parents don't trust what the teachers say because every time they say "your child is doing so well, so well" but then the child is always in the same level. What can we say? (mother)

I find this is the biggest problem. I feel that my son will also encounter this problem. For example, they (school) don't separate the levels of the students. I feel that they need to have separate levels. For instance, give them an interview test or a writing test, let the kids have a basis (to work from) so they can make further progress. (mother)

Most of the children expressed their desire to be in graded levels of ESL according to their English proficiency.

Adolescents

They always put a (ESL) student one level down (when they enter the school system) but they should put them one level up. I could have gone one less year in ESL but instead they made me go one extra year of ESL. (son)

The levels are so different. Some of the classmates have really bad English and some of the people are good and they mix them together so some people feel boring when they go to class.(son)

4.7.2.4 Exit

Many parents thought of ESL courses as time taken away from their children's learning in the mainstream classes:

When we first got here I stressed to them (my children) that I'll only give them one year in ESL. (I said) 'You must get out in one year otherwise we will move to an area with only Caucasians.' So they are a little worried. Maybe I put too much pressure on them. I feel that if they can get it done in a short time then don't waste time. They can use that time to do other things. (mother)

Yes, if they are put in with regular students, wouldn't they catch on naturally?! Kids learn so quickly from each other. If there are so many students and only one teacher (in ESL), then of course they learn slowly and then the time they spend in ESL is so long and then they are going from one class to another and saying "it's so easy, so easy..." So he wastes so many years. (mother)

When ____ (daughter) was in grade 10 I asked her why she couldn't go to regular classes since she was already in ESL for three years. She said that there were too few regular classes so they had to make the ____ (transition) class stay another year. So I feel that this is too long for the kid to be in ESL. As a school they should make more regular classes and when the kid is ready to go into regular they should be allowed to do so immediately. So I feel that she has wasted one year. (mother)

Some students mentioned the value of ESL classes and most students talked about their desire to move into the mainstream as quickly as possible.

Adolescents

It (ESL) helped me a little. I feel that one and a half years is enough for me. Depending on the student it could be longer or shorter. (daughter)

I feel it's for learning English. They also teach you the learning styles of the people here. It's useful for the newly arrived immigrants. Otherwise it's boring. I'm now in second year ESL. (son)

If a student doesn't want to study it then I don't think it's necessary to put a student into ESL. Like myself. Like I don't want to go to (ESL) class. Even if I go to class I'm just fooling around...I consider if you put me in regular classes I'll learn more things than in ESL. (son)

4.7.3 Teachers Giving Homework and Tests

Similar to Taiwan, the parents placed much of the responsibility of learning here on the teacher's ability to pressure the students by giving them tests in class and loads of homework in preparation for the tests. Much concern was shown about the adolescent's lack of homework and therefore the lack of sufficient school pressure to help their children study on their own.

4.7.3.1 Homework and Pressure

This kid is a bit passive so when he came here he felt very free. If it were in Taiwan, the teacher would push him everyday with lots of homework. There's very little homework here. In Taiwan there's lots of homework and tests and they push it. (mother)

Now he's (son) gotten used to not being conscientious with his homework. He just doesn't do them quickly. In any case, the way the teachers do things here is that they don't pressure them. (father)

For example, the teacher asks them to read a novel (at home). They only have to read one chapter per week and there are only a few pages per chapter. I feel that if the teacher pressures the student, the student can read more than that. I feel that they have the ability to do that because they have Saturdays and Sundays off. (mother)

Even having lots of learning content doesn't help. The teachers need to give them (children) homework and tests. The kids are still scared of tests, even after coming here. They need scores, grades. (father)

In Taiwan the teachers keep putting pressure on the kids, but my kids come here and they are not serious about studying at all. I feel that they just don't spend enough time doing homework in the evenings. They just do a few hours. (mother)

He (son) said that the teachers aren't conscientious at teaching and there's not enough teaching materials. They're (teachers) afraid that the kids won't be able to absorb the materials so they let them be too relaxed. (father)

Although the students did not specifically address the topic of homework, some talked about their daily schedules, which included their activities after school. One student, however, did mention the need for corporal punishment to incite students to do their homework.

Adolescents

I feel that it's too lax here. I feel that sometimes the students should be hit because they deserve to be hit but every time they don't get hit even when they don't do their homework, it doesn't matter. (son)

I go to school about 8:30 and go home about 3:15. I go straight home afterwards and watch TV at home. I listen to music also, the latest pop stars from Taiwan. (son)

I watch TV or play basketball. I usually play computer games. (son)

I like to watch TV and movies, go sightseeing or read novels. I don't like to read much in English, maybe short stories. I like doing math. (daughter)

4.7.3.2 Homework and Memorization

Parents often spoke of memorizing the class materials as part of homework for their children to learn successfully.

Parents

In ESL I feel that both of them (children) don't get enough homework. They have so little homework! The teachers should give them more vocabulary or some sentences and tell them to memorize them at home then give them a test the next day. It's like that in Taiwan, so the kids progress really fast. No, not here. The teachers teach them and then nothing (no follow-up) aside from preparation for the big exam. They should be preparing (reviewing) all the time. The teachers don't give them homework or anything else all the time. (mother)

I feel that in ESL the teachers should give them more homework. Make them memorize more vocabulary and grammar. Give them more exercises. He (son) really doesn't get enough homework. (mother)

Although none of the students mentioned the lack of enough homework, some mentioned their views about homework and about memorization.

Adolescents

Here because there's more, well, some homework and less tests so you don't have to work much harder than in Taiwan at home or at school doing the homework. In Taiwan, homework means memorize something and we'll have test next time. (daughter)

In Taiwan teachers give you a whole bunch of questions and we just do it. And in tests we just plug in the formula you did before and change the number and that's it, you don't have to think a lot. But here the teachers won't give you a lot of questions and you have to think a lot... some questions you've never done before but you have to think of ways to do it, to solve it. (son)

The teachers let the students who do their homework well go up to the next level. Those students don't speak in the class. It's because they do their homework well. (son)

I don't like to memorize. The best way (to learn) is to understand, but I think you have to memorize some things. (daughter)

4.7.4 Study Skills and Pressure

For the parents, many were concerned with maintaining the study skills the Taiwanese education system imposed upon their children in Taiwan. Many feared that their children would lose their inclination to study on their own especially in the absence of the "pressures" imposed by the school.

Parent

My oldest had two years of junior high (in Taiwan). Junior highs are very strict in Taiwan. So he is already used to how to schedule his own studying and his own goals of learning. But the younger one is not the same. Since he came here no one is taking care of him. Also he didn't have the Taiwanese junior high training. So he just does what he feels like. Some times I tell him but he doesn't listen. He doesn't even answer if he agrees or not...It's annoying. (mother)

I feel that Taiwanese kids already have a habit. If they are not under pressure then they won't study. They've brought their Taiwanese habit with them here. (father)

As the topic of study skills was not mentioned by any of the children, those who talked about their experience with learning here, mentioned independent thinking and independent study as a practice very different from Taiwan.

Adolescents

Then some teachers just give us some topics and made us work on our own. I don't like that because the teacher had not explained to us too clearly. They said we had to do the questions ourselves so that we could learn how to solve them ourselves. (son)

Here the teachers want us to depend on ourselves. We'd have class for ten minutes and then we had to do independent studies. In some classes they just give us the topics and then we had to study on our own. (daughter)

I have to think more here. And we don't have any reference book for answers so we have to think for ourselves. (daughter)

4.7.5 Parental Involvement

All the parents described their own methods of helping their children adjust and excel in the education system here. The following comments are representative of the underlying concerns and helplessness the parents feel about their children's schooling here.

I went to the ESL parent teacher meetings. It really took courage on my part because my English wasn't very good. But then I felt I must go because I wanted my children to feel that we care even if I couldn't speak English well and couldn't understand too clearly. One ESL teacher said to me that I was a 100% parent. I had asked her so many questions so I thought she said that because she thought I was so worried. (mother)

In Taiwan, we as parents always knew what schedule they have each day and which textbooks they needed to take with them. Sometimes we glance at their textbooks, but here, I don't understand English. I don't know which level they are at, what they are writing, what they are learning. They don't tell me. (mother)

4.7.5.1 Lack of English and Helplessness

The parents also talked about their own lack of English which renders them helpless toward their children's schooling here, and in turn, their own frustrations and misgivings about themselves.

Parents

As a mother I feel that I'm not doing a good job. I feel that the kids are getting it too easy. (mother)

We just tell them to study. We can't help them much. Their English is better than ours. We can only give them advice because we don't know the content of their homework. As parents in Taiwan we can understand everything. But here, our English isn't as good as theirs. (mother)

Like for your child, if you feel that they don't read enough based on the assignments from school, then you can tell them what else to read. But we don't know how to help them. So when we feel that they have nothing to do, we don't know what to tell them to read, we just don't have the knowledge or the English to do that. (mother)

In Taiwan, I can help him find a lot of things. I can look at his homework, or when they are doing other things but here I just don't have the resources to help him nor can we find the resources to help them. (mother)

I can't understand English so when he is studying I sit next to him at the table and keep him company. I sit there every night when he studies...There's no way I could check if he's doing his homework right. I don't have the ability to do that. (mother)

The parents wonder why their kids don't get out of ESL when the teachers say they are doing so well. The parents ask how they can help their kids to get out of ESL. They don't know except that the teacher says for the kids to read a lot...They don't know what they should get for the kids to begin reading. (mother)

Some of the children mentioned what their parents are like since their move to Canada.

Adolescent

She doesn't usually nag us if we don't have problems (with school). She doesn't tell us what to read. (daughter)

I think my parents have changed a lot. Like, they let me do anything, like, how to, my dress, my hairstyle. In Taiwan I didn't think that much and my parents did all that kind of stuff for me. But here, I do that kind of stuff myself. My dad won't bother to talk to me (about it). (son)

4.7.5.2 Parents, Home Study and Pressure

Despite being hindered by insufficient knowledge of English and the education system in Canada, most parents mentioned their commitment to maintaining at home the type of learning pressure the children were exposed to in Taiwan as a way of helping their children to study.

Parents

When they do their homework I am by their side to supervise them. Each day they do it for two to three hours at home, then the tutors come two days a week for English. (mother).

So I know what a lot of parents are like. They have so many tutors and for every subject. They also schedule English lesson everyday and pressure their kids to death to study no matter what. Make the kid study! The Taiwanese kids can't take their own initiatives." (father)

Most of the children spoke of some sort of parental support or advice they receive now at home.

Adolescent

In Taiwan my parents helped me with math questions and I could understand. In Canada the homework is pretty easy and I don't think I get any help here. They (parents) tell me to speak more English, memorize more vocabulary. (son)
My parents are less strict with me than in Taiwan. (son)

My mother has more time to spend with me than in Taiwan. It's better. (son)

They help me (with my homework). (But) they give me too much pressure. (son)

4.7.5.3 Tutoring

All of the parents and their children spoke of using tutors not just to help with English but also to help the children excel in their courses.

The two of us (mother and father) are feeling so nervous and anxious. We hire tutors and every day we feel that we need to push them. (mother,father)

They (tutors) know how to tell the kids to get good marks on tests. It's just like having brought Taiwan here. (father)

There's not enough homework here in ESL. So as a mother, when I try to give him homework he didn't want to do it. So I ended up hiring a tutor because the student listens to a teacher better. (mother)

Adolescent

I have two tutors. They teach me grammar, writing, essay. One tutor comes twice and one tutor comes once. The first tutor is great. I can speak a lot of English with her and the second gives me a lot of homework. I don't like lot of homework but I think she's a really good teacher. The second tutor told me that I need to speak English 50%. (son)

The tutors here are Canadians and they know the Canadian system. What do they know about the ESL system? My tutor is already teaching me at the university level, like, stream of consciousness, vicarious experience, protagonist, antagonist.... Even in ____ (highest ESL level) they don't teach us. (son)

They (tutors) teach us English literature two times per week and then there's Chemistry. They speak in English. The language you use in science is different from communication...He helps us with the lab reports. I think he's from China. He speaks Chinese with my mother and always speaks English with us. (daughter)

4.7.5.4 Insight

Even with the concerns they have for their children's academic achievement in Canada, the parents nonetheless were able to share some of the broader insights they have surrounding the issues of their children's education.

Parents

I encourage my kids to go make more Canadian friends and communicate with them. I tell them they need to take the initiative because Chinese kids tend to be more passive. They are shy because they are just from the Taiwanese system which has suppressed them for so long. (mother)

My husband feels that no matter what, if he is here, home is here. If we are together then our home is here. We parents feel that if we have the correct viewpoints then the kids will have the right point of views as well. We hope. (mother)

Of course he (son) likes it better here. There's way less pressure than Taiwan. But for me, I think it's too relaxed here. I feel that he needs to do a lot more in order to learn but I see that he does his homework and finishes it so fast. But then he doesn't take time to review. (mother)

____ (Son) is happy here. He loves to go to school. He doesn't want to be at home... He is very well adjusted to living here. He 's really like a Canadian kid... speaks well but bad at writing. Just like a Canadian kid. (father)

There's no parents who don't care. It's just that we don't know how to help. I feel so sorry for the parents. The parents come here and they don't know a thing. (father)

Adolescent

She found us a great neighbourhood. She talks to her friends to get information and helps us select our courses. (daughter)

4.8 Future of Children

Inevitably, the spanning of the "stories on education " across two countries converges on the parents' and their children's ultimate goal for the children's future. All of the parents and children talk about post-secondary education in North America or Asia.

4.8.1 Higher Education

Parents

We want them to be able to go to a good university here where they will not have a hard time to find a job when they graduate. Maybe because of threat, when we give them pressure it's because we ourselves don't understand too well and we need to make them have confidence in these points. (mother)

I feel that the children should graduate from a university. No matter which university as long as they have a good formal education. (father)

C. says she wanted to be a pilot or a graphic designer. I told her that we don't really agree. So she decided on computer studies. In Taiwan she got 97% in computer

studies, 97% in English and math close to 120%. I feel that she won't have much stress with that (Computer Studies). (mother)

Adolescents

I hope I can go to university in Canada. Hopefully _____ (local university).
(daughter)

I want to stay here but my dad says that if I want to earn money or get a good job then I'd better go back to Taiwan... I want to finish university here. Maybe if I want a new job then I'll go back to Taiwan... (son)

My father wants me to go to the U.S., to a really, really, really good one. Yes, I want to go to university. The better the school, the better for me; the best! I think I'll go into science. (son)

After I graduate from University maybe I'd like to do a Masters in Business. I'll go back to Taiwan after my Masters. (daughter)

4.9 Advice

All of the participants contributed advice to fellow new immigrant families. Advice to new immigrant parents can be organized under the main categories of "predeparture," "communication and behavior" with their adolescents, "expectations and pressure" from parents, and "general observations" made. Please note that not all the categories were commented on by both the parent group and the adolescent group.

4.9.1 To New Immigrant Parents

4.9.1.1 Predeparture

A few parents stressed the importance of preparing and obtaining information about coming to Canada prior to emigration.

As immigrants, the whole family should prepare themselves mentally to be able to accept this environment before coming here. Before they come here they have to get information. (father)

4.9.1.2 Communication and Behavior

A mother commented on the importance of maintaining a close relationship to and expressing open support for the adolescents.

Parents

I really think that a kid's upbringing and her relations with her family is the most important thing. Good marks are not the most important thing... We really have to let them know that we are satisfied with them. (mother)

Some of them (parents) just don't know what to do, let their children 'like cows let to pasture.' ... Some of the parents feel that they'll let their kids play first then study because here in 11th and 12th grades there's more pressure. So it's like they don't 'pull in their net' in the beginning and when they want to 'pull in their nets' it's too late. (mother)

Some of the adolescents expressed similar viewpoints.

Adolescent

Don't push their children too hard and give them their support like talk to them when they are home. (daughter)

I think that parents need to care more about their children because the children here are not really well behaved. Just like, lots of people are smoking and hanging out. They go out and come back home really late. (son)

4.9.1.3 Expectations and Pressure

Both the parents and the adolescents gave advice on the topics concerning high expectations from the parents and the need to pressure the students to have a speedy exit from the ESL program.

Parents

Parents should help their kids as much as possible by encouraging them to be more interested in the topic (they are studying) than just studying for the sake of passing exams. In today's _____ (local Chinese newspaper) there was an article. It said that this family let their kids play piano, go skating, go skiing and all three of them graduated from medical school. What I meant was that they just learned the things they liked to learn. But then we can't say that if we let our kids do all they want they'll become like those kids (in the newspaper). (mother)

A parent made a noteworthy remark about unrealistic expectations.

I want to say that people should not think that all their problems will be solved once they leave Taiwan. That's because so many thought so in Taiwan. They say, "Once my kids leave the country, they'll be fine." There's a saying; "The cow that is brought to Beijing is the same cow." But so many mothers think everything will be solved once they leave Taiwan. That's not realistic if the child has bad grades in Taiwan that they'll get good grades here. (mother)

Adolescents

Not to pressure (your kids) doesn't mean you don't care. Maybe you can learn with them, like children and parents (learning) language together. (daughter)

Don't push their kids too hard. They've just come here and if you want them to get good marks the first time, it's not going to happen. It's too hard for them. Try to give them some time, like a year or two years. Like, try to let them get into the society. Don't try to push them too hard. (son)

If you put them in mainstream they'll freak out. (daughter)

I feel that English can't be learned in one or two days. Parents shouldn't be so anxious. Also I think they should let their kids go out and join more activities at school and absorb some culture here. The parents when they come here they want their kids to hurry up and catch up and learn English better. They should let their kids integrate into the lifestyle here. I also feel that parents should also integrate themselves into the lifestyle here. (daughter)

Most parents will tell you to try to get out of ESL fast. I mean students will be pressured in some way. I think students will naturally get out. Sometimes you (parents) have to be careful to make sure your kids are not too pressured. (son)

Try to give them (the kids) some time like a year or two years, like try (in trying) to get into society. Don't push them too hard. Kids are different than adults. They cannot take things. Once they get frustrated, they get frustrated again. (son)\

4.9.2 To New Immigrant Students

The comments made to the new immigrant students were primarily in the areas of "communication" between parents and their adolescents, "peer influence," and "academic achievement."

4.9.2.1 Communication

Similar remarks were made to the students in regard to communicating more openly with their parents and speaking up for themselves at school.

Parents

I feel that kids should communicate more with their parents. Many just say that they can't communicate so they don't bother to say anything. Then they start to hang out with other friends outside of school and skip school. They should speak out and think of a solution. (mother)

Adolescents

If you want to catch up with the other students, it depends on you. Like before when I wanted to go to ____ (higher ESL level), the counsellor said there was no space. My tutor told me to be brave so I spoke to the vice-principal. And I told him how upset I was, so he changed me. Stand up for yourself. Express your own opinion. That's something they don't teach you in Taiwan. (daughter)

4.9.2.2 Peer Influence

Again concerned with the type of adolescents' social circle and possible negative influence from their "new" peers here, the immigrant parents and the adolescents mentioned:

Parents

We just don't want the kids to meet any gang members. (father)

There seems to be smoking at school. It seems to me that the students wear strange clothes. I saw a student whose hair was purple. It was really strange to me. I asked my kids if they think those students wearing strange clothes looked nice or not. They just say those people like it. (mother)

Adolescents

Don't hang out with the Chinese (kids) too much. Don't isolate yourself or try to change yourself too much. Some kids I know from Taiwan are doing things that they've never done before. They are very wild already. (son)

I suggest them to make friends with local Canadians. They can still have one or two Chinese friends. Most important, local Canadian. (daughter)

Right now there's too many of us. I don't feel I'm in an English speaking country. I feel I'm still in Taiwan. Most of my friends are not white. They were born here, second generation. They speak English but they are not really Canadian. They still can speak some Chinese, but most of the time they speak English. If I hang out with Canadian, I'll speak English, if I hang out with Taiwanese I'll speak Taiwanese or Mandarin.

(son)

Like first two years I hang out with some friends and they are in gangs and I tried to prove myself. Become big problem, like, always get into fights and many people, especially guys try to be different person. Many of them (gangs) come from Taiwan, Vietnam, Hong Kong. Don't hang out with people like that. (son)

4.9.2.3 Academic Achievement

Both the parents and the adolescents gave a variety of tips as to how the new immigrant student may succeed more easily in the education system here.

Parents

If the Taiwanese students come here after they've passed grade eight then I feel that it's easier to help them. All they have to improve is English because in Taiwan they've already learned the materials. (father)

Adolescents

If you just came here, you can't do everything around you, even if you've studied English in your own country. Just don't be worry, just be fine. I wanted to memorize all the words I didn't understand but that's impossible - (I even tried memorizing) the TV Manual. (daughter)

When they first come they shouldn't read anything. Just learn to speak and learn. At least in the first half year. (son)

I feel the best way to learn English is to watch movies. You can see how they speak, how they live. We borrowed English videos with Chinese captions. Sometimes it's a good way to learn vocabulary. (son)

Study hard and watch English TV often. Volunteer! (daughter)

4.9.3 A Reflection on Self and Family Adjustments

While sharing their stories, there were moments when the parents delved beyond their concern with their children's education to expound on their inner doubts and on the understanding of the decision and consequences of their move to Canada.

Parents:

Now I heard this famous writer encouraging the immigrants to "get down to the ground and grow roots." If you are going to go there to live then you have to grow roots there so that you can be a part of the society. He says that we have to change. But I feel that it's impossible. We've come out at this age, how can that be possible? So I feel that those families where the whole family came out (of Taiwan) must be suffering a lot. So we continue to live here and the distance between us and Taiwan becomes further and further. So, we don't know what to do. (mother)

My husband said that, a tree when it's very young, it's very easy to pull it up and come here to plant it. But an old tree, when you want to move it, it's very hard. You have to cut it and when you plant it, it's hurting. So it's very hard to move an old tree. So he feels that we are like that. (mother)

I feel that each system has its good points and bad points. I feel that the Taiwanese education is more solid. Maybe it's because we are more used to it. For example, they (the teachers) make you study this and that - doesn't give you time to think. Also there's overall control over you because you have to deal with a lot of tests. So because you spend all that time dealing with the tests you don't have time to think of other problem. (mother)

Adolescent

I prefer Taiwan because I feel that Taiwan is my country. But as for the environment, Canada is much better; the air in Taiwan is too dirty. As for education, now, I feel that I can learn more here. I don't like Taiwan for education. After being here and having gone back to Taiwan, I see that the Taiwanese students look like they are in a daze all the time. Everyday they have to study. It seems very strange to me. They all walk in a group. (son)

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In this chapter, discussion of the findings is presented based upon the research questions raised in Chapter One: 1) What are Taiwanese immigrant parents' perceptions of factors that influence their children's academic achievement? 2) What are their perceptions of their children's academic achievement and its relation, if any, to their ESL learning experience, 3) What are the children's perceptions of their ESL learning experience and its relation, if any, to their academic achievement?

5.1 General Observations

The data from this study, at the outset, confirm the findings of several earlier studies regarding the aspirations of immigrant parents in general for their children to attain a certain level of academic performance in the host country (Duran and Weffer, 1992; Ghuman, 1989; Hayes, 1992; Kalantzis, Gurney & Cope, 1991). It also confirms findings as to the perceptions held by parents of ESL students concerning "evaluation," "ESL progress" and "homework" as reported in the British Columbia Teachers' Federation focus group research (Fong, et al., 1993). While parents in the BCTF focus groups were reported to be "unanimous" concerning the "great benefit" of ESL/ESD classes, this study, comprised only of Taiwanese parents, shows little indication of the perceptions of "benefit" in ESL classes.

As a new study highlighting the perspective of a parent group of ESL adolescents in the "multicultural, multilingual learning community" (Mohan, 1996) of a culturally diversified Canadian public secondary ESL program, the data allow a clear interpretation of what constitutes academic achievement and language learning for recent Taiwanese immigrant parents. The parents' stories reflect the often a jarring collision between their own educational experiences and language socialization processes and those of their children.

This divergence from findings of earlier studies may be attributable to the parents' relatively high socioeconomic standing and the uncertainty of their own intentions as to whether they will remain in the host country or wish their children finally to settle there. Unlike Ghuman's (1989) study of Hong Kong parents settled in Manchester who are mostly satisfied with the British schooling, and unlike the BCTF 1994 Focus Group reports, this study demonstrates clearly the tensions Taiwanese parents feel about their high school children's schooling in the host country, and especially their children's placement in the ESL program.

The parents' reflections on their children's educational experience in Taiwan and in Canada would appear to parallel the experience of reflective thinking a teacher undergoes with respect to his or her own teaching in the classroom as prescribed by Richards and Lockhart, (1994) and Connelly & Clandinin, (1988). It is important to reiterate that it is not within the scope of this study to include data gathered from ESL teachers. The information provided on ESL pedagogy in the study is gathered from the parents' and their children's perceptions as well as from texts of authority on ESL pedagogy (Brown, 1994; Mohan, 1991; Nunan, 1993, 1988; Widdowson, 1993). Similar to the revisiting of the source of teachers' belief systems founded on "the goals, values, and beliefs teachers hold in relation to the content and process of teaching" and using the "reflective" model of the ESL teachers as prescribed by Richards and Lockhart (1994), this study sheds light on the goals, values, and beliefs parents hold concerning the content and process of their children's formal learning. Such reflective "verbal activities" by the parents or, for that matter, the teachers, are grounded in, and concerned with, the language socialization process. Defined by Schieffelin and Ochs as "both socialization through language and socialization to use language" (1986, p.2), the interpretation of the findings in this chapter is suitably framed within the rubric of "reflective thinking of parents on the language socialization process of their children." This

researcher thus follows the path set out by Mohan & Smith (1991) where “language socialization researchers consider how vocal and verbal activities are socially organised and embedded in cultural systems of meaning and interaction” (p.86).

This study suggests that the parents’ reflective thinking on educational experiences and the teacher’s reflective teaching in a second language classroom are significant processes that must occur and interact in order to begin to accommodate educational change in an ever-changing world.

A similar use of reflective perspectives to propel and direct educational reform is succinctly presented in Su, Su & Goldstein (1994) in their study of visiting teachers from China who discuss their first-hand views of American secondary school science teaching and learning, comparing their observations to their own teaching experiences in China. The Taiwanese participants’ comparisons of the Taiwanese and the Canadian education systems bear strong resemblance to Su, et al’s Chinese teachers’ reflections. The Su et al. (1994) study thus serves as a touchstone for this study, particularly with reference to the Chinese teachers’ suggestions for improvement of science instruction in both China and America based on their reflections.

The discussion in this chapter will center on parents’ perceptions, with some interjection of students’ views. Where both the parents and their children’s views are similar, the discussion will include both points of view together. Where the views differ, the conflicting views will be duly noted. It is also important to note again from Chapter Three that, unless otherwise discussed, the views presented (by either the parents or the students) are considered in terms of Thommen, von Cranach and Ammann (1992) interpretations of a “social representation” of the recent Taiwanese immigrants. Thommen et al. form an assumption that “individual action is steered by social cognition which comes from the social

representation of the social system” (p.200). This theory forms the basis for the possible “generalization” of the individuals’ stories.

5.2 Reasons for Leaving Taiwan

Similar to those in studies conducted by Tseng (1995), the participants in this study belong to the class of highly educated professionals or managers that dominate the group of Taiwanese immigrants to the United States and Canada, a population that has tripled in number between 1980 and 1990.

In this study, all the families indicated without reservation that they immigrated to Canada for the education of their children. This chief motive for migration is consistent with the results of earlier studies on the adjustment of Taiwanese immigrant families in British Columbia, (Chong, Lin et al., 1994). All of the parents and their children contrasted the rigidity, the pressurized environment, the long hours of studies and homework, and the “Narrow Gate” (Lin, 1984) education system they encountered in Taiwan to that of the education system here. The parents talked about their aspirations for higher education for their children outside of Taiwan, aspirations dependent upon their children’s secondary school education training here. As exemplified by one parent, “We want them to be able to go to a good university here where they will not have a hard time to find a job when they graduate.” The adolescents, on their own, all echoed similar goals of higher education for themselves either in North America or in Asia. (See section 4.8) According to Smith (1991) and Glasgow, et al. (1997), in their studies of racially mixed and economically diverse samples, such inclinations to agree with parents’ educational goals are congruent in general with the attitudes of adolescents who were generally satisfactory in school and the offspring of well educated, goal oriented parents. Although most of the adolescents interviewed were

average or below average in ESL, one can still classify their general achievement in schools as satisfactory by general Canadian secondary school achievement standards.

The consensus of “education” or the possibility of “better or alternative” education as the reason for emigration given by the parents and their children is clearly evident from the data. However, in considering the degree of tension, anxiety and frustration that underlies much of the discourse in this study, the researcher felt compelled to gather and include further information gained from recent literature and local community sources. This information is necessary in understanding the broader schema and gaining deeper insight into the complexities of why this particular group of Taiwanese immigrants left Taiwan.

As reflected in the comments of several respected local Taiwanese community workers who are recent immigrants as well, and also in studies conducted by Tseng (1995) on the recent migration of Taiwanese immigrants to Los Angeles, the participants in this study belong to the Taiwanese immigrant group considered to have left Taiwan in what Tseng termed the period of the “Taiwanese exodus” (Tseng, 1995, p.37). The exodus has been taking place despite the rapid economic growth in Taiwan and is mostly attributed to 1) political instability (Tseng, 1995), 2) deteriorating social conditions on the island (Tseng, 1995) and 3) the fiercely competitive education system (Morris, 1996).

The Taiwanese are constantly worried about their country’s long-term prospects with regard to its relationship with the People’s Republic of China (Morris & Sweeting, 1995). This anxiety is further aggravated by Hong Kong’s return to Chinese rule, recent proclamations of the People’s Republic of China’s claim on Taiwan, and continued military tension. In addition, within the island itself, worsening conditions such as a rise in crime, concerns as to personal safety and a deteriorating natural environment have made the quality of life a primary consideration in emigration (Chong, Lin et al., 1994). Furthermore, the

pressurized, narrow and restrictive path and mode of public education drives parents to seek alternative types of education for their children, who appear unsuited to such environments.

Still, the families in our study have come to Canada with considerable uncertainty as to their own future. Having the means and perhaps inclination to return to Taiwan, they retain more of a sojourner's attitude than most other immigrants. They have taken immigrant status in Canada in part to serve as a "safety net" should their future in Taiwan be threatened to the point that they can no longer return. Furthermore, since all the families in the study maintain their businesses in Taiwan for one reason or another, one gains the impression that the participants in this study are people caught between two worlds, not totally convinced of their own desire nor committed to living in their newly adopted country permanently. The most concrete and only irredeemable commitment these families have made consists of the education of their children in Canada.

The data show the sentiments of the Taiwanese families as "sojourner-immigrants", (Brislin, 1981), that of people caught in a dilemma between the two countries they live in and between the education systems they have had and that which their children are experiencing, particularly in the ESL program.

One of the Taiwanese fathers in this study exemplifies those sentiments: "Yeah, in Taiwan they (the education system) are overdoing it and in Canada, most Taiwanese parents are unsatisfied (with the education system here). The difference is like heaven and earth."

Although such matters will not receive express attention in this study, the discussion reflects a background wherein the families have experienced and are still in the midst of experiencing the processes of cultural adjustments and acculturation as they recount their views on the contrasting education systems. Considerations of possible "social isolation",

“culture shock” and “goal-striving stress” which may affect immigrants such as these bear noting (Furnham, 1986).

As mentioned earlier, just as like teachers reflecting on their own teaching experiences, the Taiwanese parents, like any parent, all have beliefs and expectations as to the content and structures of education and its component building blocks, e.g. the curriculum, pedagogical methods, and psychological and interpersonal influences (relationships between teacher-student, teacher-parent and parent-student). They all have ideals concerning how these should be structured and the positive traits and outcomes that should be engendered. These ideals and expectations derive to a great extent from cultural and personal experiences. Consequently, parents’ comparisons of the education systems and perceptions of their children’s schooling and ESL learning reflect the subjectivity and biases of those who have only had personal experience of education in Taiwan.

The adolescents, on the other hand, are children who are caught between their parents’ aspirations and expectations, their own academic experiences in Taiwan and their daily experiences with their peers and the local education system in Canada. Their views toward ESL learning and academic achievement appear to be affected primarily by their own “investment” in their education and only secondarily by their parents. Pierce (1995) uses the term “investment” in contrast to “motivation.” For Pierce, “motivation should...be mediated by an understanding of learners’ investments in the target language...that are closely connected to the ongoing production of a language learner’s social identity” (p.20). Thus, the children’s perceptions and comments regarding their learning and their status in the ESL program are tied to their concept of their complex “social identity”, be it with their peers, “white” students, teachers or parents. Furthermore, as indicated by McKay and Wong (1996), one needs to recognize that when language learners speak in the first or the second language,

they are constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world.

It appears that one could extend the notion of “investments” to the parents in this study as well. One reason that the parents put such pressures on their children may be because the parents themselves are so bound up in their own insecurities and worries about their family’s future, particularly whether that future will be in Canada or Taiwan.

It is important to note, moreover, that the term “pressure” referred to by the parents throughout the interviews, and exemplified in these words of one father, “when there’s no pressure then they don’t want to study”, seems to carry the meaning of affective pressuring as a means to motivate the children to study. The parents appear to believe that affective pressuring will promote motivation and reinforce “investment” in the students. It would appear that this type of motivation may be loosely associated with the “instrumental” motivation described in the “Gardnerian” model of L2 learning motivation (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1991; Gardner & Tremblay, 1994). In line with criticism of the limitations of the “Gardnerian” model as failing to consider and account for individual variation in motivation, Pierce’s model of “investment” may fit better where the parents’ desire for external pressure exerted by teachers, exams and homework serves to promote the children’s own “investment” in learning. “Investment” in this context, is tied to the parent’s or the child’s social identity that addresses the relationship of the subject (parent or child) to the changing social world and the social relations of power. Hence, when one father said, “Make the kid study! The Taiwanese kids can’t take their own initiatives,” one may interpret such comments to reflect the social relations of power between the parent and the child where the parent is concerned with imbuing the child with a sense of concern for her/his own future.

5.3 Academic Experience in Taiwan

In this study, all the parents and their children spoke in varying degrees of the overwhelming demands the Taiwanese education system imposed on them if they were to succeed in their schooling. In Paratore, et al.'s (1995) study of Spanish-speaking and Southeast Asian parents in the United States, the parents at the outset perceived one of their roles in the children's learning as primarily to instill positive attitudes about schools. By contrast, however, the Taiwanese parents in this study spoke in general of the lack of choice in their children's course of education, the long hours of study and homework and the stresses and pressures the students faced to compete for placement in respected high schools in Taiwan. All the parents described their children's experience in formal education as being riddled with hardship, unrelentless pressure and incessant studying. These accounts by the Taiwanese parents, similar to those documented in other studies conducted in Taiwan and China (Lin, 1984; Lin & Chen, 1995), do not reflect positive attitudes toward Taiwanese education in general, although they reflect positive attitudes as to the importance and necessity of "schooling."

The adolescents also echoed the same sentiments of no "choices" or no "electives" in their Taiwanese education. They noted as well the de-emphasis on independent thinking in their comments; for example, that the system made the students "more dependent" on reference textbooks for answers or required "memorizing" answers. The children's comments about the Taiwanese education system are consonant with a number of reports regarding the education systems of present-day Taiwan, Japan, Korea and Singapore (Morris, 1996; Morris & Sweeting 1995; Sorensen, 1994).

5.4 Academic Experience in Canada

When the parents spoke of their general views of their children's educational experience in Canada, all commented on the emphasis of the schools placed on individualism, allowing the students to pursue their own interests, having choices for academic courses and goals and the children's experience of a sense of "liberation" after their academic experience in Taiwan. (See section 4.6.) The general impression one derives from their comments is one of relief and hope that they had found the system that would provide their children with a less painful and thus "happier" formal education.

However, parents also arrived in Canada with expectations that the education system would let their children succeed more easily and faster in their learning than in Taiwan. Parents then encountered the complex realities of their children trying to grapple with using English as a second language in a system diametrically different from what they had been used to.

Compounded with adjusting to the difficulties of migration and caught in the dilemma of being somewhere between a sojourner or a settler, the parents directed their tensions and frustrations at concrete targets of concern, namely the education system in British Columbia and their children's progress in the ESL program. It seemed that the emotion-filled interviews were outlets through which the parents were able finally to articulate some of the deep concerns they had been feeling since their arrival in Canada.

The adolescents, on the other hand, oscillated from commenting on feeling "free and more relaxed", having "choices" in courses, being able to "speak out freely", having time to "watch TV" or "play computer games", to feeling "bored" in the ESL classes, desiring to exit ESL faster, and feeling "pressure" from parents. Contrasted to their parents' emotional

comments, it appears that the learners' accounts are very straightforward and simple, directly reflecting the "likes" and "dislikes" of their actual experiences.

5.5 Factors influencing Academic Achievement in Taiwan and Canada

The five salient domains of the children's Taiwanese academic experience that emerged from the parent interviews were the subjects of tests, marks, homework, punishment and parental support. These same domains were mentioned in regard to the children's academic success in Canada, including their progress in ESL. Furthermore, interwoven throughout discussion of these categories were particular "driving" factors such as pressure, motivation, and study skills and habits, which the parents reiterated as factors essential to academic success. Such concerns have been noted not only among Chinese immigrant parents. Studies of other immigrant groups, including Vietnamese parents in British Columbia (Porter, 1996), Mexican immigrants to the United States (Duran and Weffer, 1992), and Vietnamese and Arabic parents in Australia (Kalantzis, Gurney & Cope, 1991) have reported similar findings. In the sections to follow each of these domains influencing academic achievement will be discussed, particularly as they intersect with the "driving" factors throughout the data.

5.6 Testing in Taiwan and in ESL classes in a British Columbian Secondary School

The topic of tests and exams surfaced as a key issue with all the Taiwanese parents in the study. Interestingly, the majority of the adolescents interviewed did not make any comments about tests in their present secondary school. Only one commented on how poorly he did on a test here and another talked about not getting tests in ESL (see section 4.7.1). However, all the parents indicated that their primary markers for the evaluation of their children's academic achievement were based on test scores and standardized exams. This dependency on test scores and testing as a major means of evaluation is understandable. It

has been ingrained in Taiwanese families as a function of Taiwan's educational system, termed a "testocracy", similar to the Korean system (Sorensen, 1994), where exam scores are the sole determinants for entry into prestigious, nationally-ranked high schools and post-secondary institutions.

In conjunction with the topic of tests and marks, various aspects of "pressure" induced by testing were also discussed. Further analysis reveals four types of pressure identified by the parents. They consist of 1) parents exerting pressure on the school administration and teachers to give tests, 2) parents themselves pressuring the children to study in order to pass tests, 3) teachers pressuring students to study and excel by giving them tests and 4) parents and teachers pressuring the students to study hard, get good grades and get into a good university (see section 4.5.1). The four aspects will be discussed next, separately or together, as they appear in the data.

1. Parents pressuring school and teachers

Several Taiwanese parents described themselves as parents who "pressure" principals and teachers to give their children tests in order to keep their children studying to attain higher scores. These Taiwanese parents stated that they do the same pressuring no matter which culture they are in (Taiwan or Canada). Three mothers and a father indicated specifically that they went to see their children's principals or teachers either in Taiwan or in Canada to request that they give more tests to their children so as to impel their children to study more.

Another factor relevant to an understanding of parents' pressuring the schools to give tests is what Seigner (1983) refers to as a concrete component of the parents' need for "school feedback" to test their own "realistic expectations" of their children's achievement. "Realistic expectations" are explained by Seigner (1993) as predictions made by parents that

their child will attain a certain level of academic performance which is to be substantiated by marks or grades on tests or report cards (p.6). All of the Taiwanese parents and most of their children mentioned the frustrations they were having when the students were not given benchmark tests at regular intervals or standardized tests to examine their progress in the ESL courses (see section 4.7.2). Furthermore the parents mentioned that with the lack of pressure induced by preparing for tests, the students became less inclined to study (see section 4.7.2) on their own.

The students all remarked on the tremendous pressure they felt by being “always judge...by marks” in Taiwan. They talked about the period after school each day when the teachers and students do at least six or seven “practice tests” to prepare for the entrance exams. They also mentioned standardized tests where “everyone is doing the same test.” One student further mentioned that “the tests were really boring” (see section 4.5.1). In direct contrast to their parents’ suggestions that there be more tests and standardized tests, none of the students expressed a desire for a similar type of test experience in Canada. However, without further research on standardized testing in ESL programs in British Columbia at this point, one should not make the assumption that ESL students are entirely opposed to the parents’ suggestions of ESL benchmark testing in British Columbia based on the lack of students’ comments on the topic in this study.

2. Parents pressuring children

In addition to pressuring schools and teachers in Taiwan to teach to the “entrance exams”, the parents also talked about pressuring their children to study during and after school hours. These comments parallel those parents made concerning the need for ESL teachers here to push their children to study more by giving more tests and homework. The parents, now in Canada, are pushing their children to study to get out of the ESL program

and enter into the mainstream classes. The situations in Taiwan and Canada both reflect parents pressuring their children to study well and to compete rigorously with other students for the few desirable spaces available, namely the prestigious spaces available in Taiwan's notable high school and post secondary institutions, or in Canada, those limited spaces in the mainstream classes (see sections 4.5 and 4.7.2). Since the parents are used to pressuring their children to attain high scores in Taiwan to achieve their educational goals, they are smitten with frustration and concern here when they see that there is not an emphasis on examinations in ESL. This means they are deprived of their customary feedback and that their parenting strategies of pressuring their children to study for tests no longer work. Consequently, jumping from a system where tests are everything to an ESL system where tests are not the primary evaluation tools naturally creates much confusion among the Taiwanese parents and their children (see sections 4.5 & 4.7). All the parents commented on the lack of tests and the lack of pressure on their children to study during school or after school.

3. Teacher pressuring students

Addressing the classroom domain, the parents expressed their views of the Taiwanese teacher as an authoritarian whose quality is judged by his or her ability to pressure the students to study for tests, to be strict at all times and to inform the parents of their children's educational achievement by providing test scores.

4. Parents and teachers pressuring students

The parents moreover portray the ideal image of the teacher-parent relationship in Taiwan as having a common concrete goal to forcefully guide, (pressure) and teach the students to pass tests and entrance exams (see section 4.5.1). Both the teachers and the parents share the desire for their students to be admitted to reputable secondary or post

secondary schools, achievements which will reflect splendidly on family, teacher and school alike. This sharing of common goals and assumptions is an essential element in Asian countries such as Taiwan, Korea and Japan. Sorensen (1994), in his study of the Korean educational system, described such a relationship between the parent and the teacher as “the teacher-parent coalition.” It is a “coalition” that comes about, not because parents and teachers have intensive interaction, because in fact they do not. Instead it derives from the parents’ acknowledgement of the teacher’s superior education which qualifies him or her to mold the character of the students as well as give them the requisite knowledge to pass the all-important tests.

The parents complained, however, that in Canada there was no focus on the use of tests as academic determinants and there was, therefore, a lack of clear criteria for the various levels of assessment of ESL students (see section 4.7.1). In fact, ten of the parents expressed concern about the lack of pressure on their children, a condition which may result in the children not motivating themselves to study on their own. With the “de-emphasis” of “external pressures and tests” by the ESL teachers, who instead based their evaluations on student self- and group evaluation, and criterion-referenced evaluation (ESL Handbook, 1993), the parents seemed at a loss as to how to evaluate their children’s educational progress. They see their children as lacking a clear goal or incentive for which to study. Parents expressed their frustration and lack of faith in the effectiveness of the ESL programs and the intentions of the teachers in Canada. Most of the parents indicated that their children’s ESL courses were “too easy” for them and that their children lack the challenges, mainly the pressure of tests, to help them progress more quickly out of ESL courses and to mainstream classes. It seems implicit in their view, though not explicitly stated in their interviews, that if there were standardized achievement tests, they would then expect to see

their children “cramming and rote learning” at home similar to ways that students prepared for tests in Taiwan or China (Lin & Chen, 1995). Six parents, in fact, mentioned that the teachers needed to provide standardized, objective markers, such as across-the-level achievement tests in order to help them and their children be informed of the children’s progress in ESL (see section 4.7.2).

5.7 Child’s Progress in ESL

On their child’s progress in ESL, the Taiwanese parents demonstrate what Seigner (1983) termed as the “naïve theory of parental knowledge.” Seigner uses that term to refer to the ability of working class parents to assess their child’s ability and to base their judgement of the child’s future on such assessment. He said, “the child’s educational future depends on his or her parents’ judgment of whether he or she ‘has it in him’” (Seigner, 1983, p.11). This view fits well with the majority of the views of the Taiwanese parents that their children either do not need ESL courses or that they will be out of ESL within a short period of time (see section 4.7.2). All the parents support such views with comments as to the children receiving ample extracurricular support through English tutoring at home during the school year and holidays.

The students on the whole matched their parents in their desire to graduate from the ESL program quickly and to attend classes with clearly graded levels instead of a multi-level ESL class. However, most of the students also indicated in varying degrees that ESL courses are useful and necessary. Four students suggested that attendance in the ESL program could be an option depending on the student’s preference.

The Taiwanese students’ and parents’ shared values and aspirations of academic acceleration and success are not surprising considering the sociocultural factors and the interpersonal interactions Chinese students have with their families (Schneider and Lee,

1990). According to Schneider and Lee's study (1990) of the school and home environment of East Asian students in the U.S., this type of shared goal is more prominent in East Asian than in Anglo families.

5.8 Teachers Giving Homework and Tests

Some of the parents and the children stressed that teachers were "strict" in Taiwan and gave lots of tests and homework. Seven parents considered those types of teachers to be good teachers. However, all the parents complained that there was too much homework and pressure from the teachers in Taiwan and expressed how deeply they felt for their children to be under such "pressures" (see section 4.5.3).

The children described homework in Taiwan as teachers "giving...whole bunch of questions and we just do it" or "memorizing something" where "you don't have to think a lot". None of the students said that they desired in Canada the same type or amount of homework they had in Taiwan. One student seemed to imply that there was not the presence of external pressure since "you don't have to work much harder than in Taiwan at home or at school doing the homework." Evidently, the children don't seem to be concerned with the lesser load of homework in Canada. Understandably, such a "relaxed" attitude and less time studying at home cause considerable anxiety among the homework-oriented parents.

Paratore et al. in their study of the home-school connection, noted that immigrant parents see homework "as a window on what was happening in the classroom and often used it to judge the quality of instruction children were receiving." It is the primary connection between home and school (Paratore, et al. 1995, p.377). The Taiwanese parents indicated homework in Taiwan meant mostly studying and memorizing materials for tests, and the parents knew it was their role to supervise the doing of the homework. Several parents even mentioned how they usually checked their children's homework in Taiwan (see section

4.7.5). Such remarks are congruent with findings concerning the Chinese parents in Chen and Stevenson's (1989) study on cross-cultural comparisons of homework in Japan, Taiwan and the United States. Chen and Stevenson noted that among the three cultures, homework is the primary out-of-school activity for Chinese children, and they devote long hours each day to their homework, more so than the Japanese or the American children. Furthermore, it was mentioned that Chinese teachers assigned more homework than their counterparts in Japan or the United States. However, in addition to the emphasis placed on homework and the large amount of time spent on homework, social class factors may also be a consideration. Studies on time use and academic achievement, such as Fuligni and Stevenson's (1995) have pointed out that, in general, students of higher socioeconomic status in Taiwan, Japan and the United States do engage in academic activities outside of school more often than other students. Nonetheless, Fuligni and Stevenson (1995) clearly point out that Chinese students in Taiwan spend the most amount of time on academic endeavours in "instruction, activities and review" and confirm that such time use is directly related to academic success (p.841).

Consequently, after seeing their children burying their heads in homework most of the time after school and during weekends in Taiwan, it is incomprehensible for the parents to see their children doing less and having more leisure time in Canada. For the Taiwanese parents this is especially frustrating in light of their children not being up to par yet with their Canadian counterparts. Ghuman (1989) reported similar results in his study of Hong Kong parents in Manchester, England who, although satisfied with the British education system, still voiced their concern about the inadequate amount of homework assigned their children.

All the Taiwanese parents complained of not enough homework for their children in Canada, in contrast to having too much homework in Taiwan. They seem to exhibit the "parental knowledge" (Seigner, 1983) that homework is a form of practice and that if the

children had longer or “lots of” homework assignments, then they would obtain higher scores on achievement tests or “can read more “ or “memorize more vocabulary and grammar.” (See sections 4.7.3.1-4.7.3.2).

The data also seemed to reveal an area of possible misunderstanding not pursued in the interviews, that is the parents’ definition of homework. According to Lee and Pruitt’s (1979) “taxonomy of homework” delineated in Strother’s (1984) study, where homework types were categorized according to purpose, it seems that the Taiwanese parents’ perception of “homework” falls into the domain of “practice.” The parents understand homework as doing repetitive exercises for the purpose of passing a test and getting a good mark for the ultimate goal of maximizing success in the highly competitive selection examinations in Taiwan. Such assumptions concerning homework, based on the Taiwan model, reflect little understanding of the “preparation”, “extension” and “creativity” types of homework (Lee and Pruitt, 1979) generally assigned in their children’s ESL program and in secondary schools generally in Canada.

According to ESL teachers, homework includes reading for pleasure, writing journals, reviewing class work, and working on projects or presentations, none of which may be marked with specific scores but are evaluated as a whole toward the student’s general ESL performance by the teacher and/or peers. Homework in the education system in British Columbia, including the ESL programs, emphasizes much “preparation” to help students to gain maximum benefits from future lessons. Such preparation includes independent thinking and taking one’s own initiatives. It also involves “extension” and “creativity” assignments that determine whether students can transfer specific skills or concepts to new situations such as presentation, project or research work. Such assignments, requiring independent and abstract thinking, are a far cry from what the parents have ever experienced in public school

education. Again we see the parents thrown into a new chasm of an “alien” world and groping for the only fail-safe model of “practice” homework that they know.

In contrast, although the children did not elaborate on the amount of “practice” homework in Canada they receive, a few talked about the type of “extension” or “creative” work they are assigned to do which makes them “think more” or “work on our own.” Some students noted that such work was more interesting, while a few mentioned that they “don’t like that.”

Since the parents link the quality of the Taiwanese teachers to the amount of homework and tests they give, they encounter a direct contrast with the practice of ESL teachers in Canada. One parent even commented on how the parents distrust what the teachers say because of the words of encouragement they used, such as “your child is doing so well, so well,” while at the same time not passing their children from ESL courses (see section 4.7.2.3). A similar concern is revealed in the British Columbia Teachers’ Federation (BCTF) research report where parents were concerned about anecdotal reporting and commented that the report card comments were “poison wrapped in sugar” (Fong, et al., 1993).

The results of the study demonstrates that the parents do not understand the role of the ESL teacher here as a facilitator. They would prefer that the teachers supply the overt pressures and tasks such as tests and homework in and out of class to make the children study competitively and to expedite their promotion to the next level of academic learning.

Again, it seems the parents were demonstrating the tensions and the complexities of being caught in two worlds as they straddle an education system where teachers give too much pressure and homework in and in the other appear too lax and should “push” and “give more homework.”

5.9 Punishment

Parents in the study extended the idea of the “parent-teacher coalition” beyond notions of the school and teacher as authorities responsible for impelling their children to study and for assigning homework. The parents also considered the school and teacher appropriate to take the role of “strict” disciplinarian for their children, again an element that is part of a shared set of values between parents and teachers in Taiwan.

The pattern of opinions interwoven with comments about “putting pressure on” the students suggested that parents not only endorsed disciplinary measures by teachers but also held the teachers responsible for providing discipline at school. The only measures of discipline the parents and their children referred to were corporal punishment which, according to the parents and students, is an illegal act in Taiwan but still practiced in varying degrees in the public schools. As in Korea, Taiwan schools follow the Confucian principle that school is the place where character is formed and correct values are nurtured (Sorensen, 1994). Many of the parents equated those teachers “hitting” students as good teachers who conducted good classes such as seen in the quote from a parent, “the teacher is meaner and stricter...and the parents appreciate that more” (see section 4.5.4).

Such a system is the antithesis of the Canadian system in which, in theory, students are respected as individuals, where physical punishment in schools is strictly forbidden by law and where children are protected under special child protection legislation. The Canadian system is similar to Ghuman’s (1989, p.137) description of the British school system, which espouses “self-discipline, liberal attitudes, understanding, tolerance and informality.” Similarly, the Taiwanese parents mirrored the Hong Kong parents in Ghuman’s study, who expressed concern with the British notions of discipline as being “too lax” and expected an authoritarian approach from the teachers. However, it is important to point out that none of

the Hong Kong parents in Ghuman's study endorsed corporal punishment whereas many of the Taiwanese parents in this study mentioned the need for the teachers to "hit" the students sometimes in order to gain more respect and to keep students studying and doing more homework. One Taiwanese parent even mentioned that "to hit them (the student), a little, not too hard" is to show that one "cares." One can speculate, based on the parents' comments, that their perception of one of the ways to show "care" or concern for a student's academic advancement is for parents and teachers to use extrinsic pressure, to be strict and to use the rod when necessary. The parents and teachers are seen ideally as "authoritarian", fostering a culturally bound Confucian "parenting style", where to be "strict", to show firm control and "governance" clearly is the responsibility or the "mandatory requirements" of caring parents and teachers (Chao, 1994).

In contrast to their generally abbreviated comments on other topics, the students often volunteered and elaborated on the topic of corporal punishment and discipline in their educational experiences. It appears that such unsolicited accounts of their experience with physical punishment may be largely due to the vivid impression that such "stress and psychological impact" leaves on adolescents (Turner & Finkelhor, 1996). The adolescents commented on the lack of punishment in Canada, which was compared to the "hits" they received sometimes when they even "miss one mark." Many students said that it is too relaxed here. Two students even said that sometimes the students should be hit: "I still think that students should be hit because they deserve to be hit, otherwise, every time they don't get hit even when they don't do their homework it doesn't matter" (see section 4.5.4). The implication of the need for external discipline to make one study is evident in this statement and held in consensus by a few of the Taiwanese students. Since the topic of punishment in Taiwanese schools was not pursued further in the study nor is there much concerning this

topic in the English-language literature, it would be beneficial to use future research to shed more light on discipline in the school and home as a factor in academic achievement.

5.10 Parental Involvement and Insights

Having realized their involvement with two education systems evinces opposite spectra of beliefs and practices toward children's academic learning, all the parents also indicated their own predicaments as new immigrant parents. Undoubtedly, the parents have demonstrated keen interest in their children's education both in Taiwan and in Canada. However, the extent of the helplessness and self-doubt some parents feel concerning their children's education in Canada is also abundantly clear from the interviews. Most of the parents conceived their role in Taiwan as supervising the children's homework, where they could "understand what they are writing (for their homework)" as well as teaching them "family values." They explained their views of the necessity of sending their children to "cram schools" (pu hsi pan) in order to keep up with studying for entrance exams. The explanations were conveyed with considerable confidence and pride. But, when describing their role in Canada, the parents described themselves as "can't understand English" or "not doing a good job" or "can't help them (the children) much."

Such statements portray the degree of low confidence and self-esteem the parents have toward their own abilities to be "good" parents by their own definitions. In theoretical terms, the immigrant parents are displaying through their "verbal acts" and "verbal stance" that they are having difficulty coming to terms with their own social identity in the new environment (Ochs, 1993). Such verbal reflections or "reflective narratives" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988) of themselves are a firm depiction of the use of the "language socialization process" to reveal one's social identity while talking about their children's language socialization process through schooling (Ochs, 1993). The parents' statements again strongly

reflect the same verbal actions and sentiments as other immigrants in British Columbia, such as the Vietnamese, Spanish-speaking and Cambodian immigrant groups, as clearly shown in the BCTF's Porter Report (1996). It appears that immigrant parents are trying to keep afloat in this new "ocean" environment, desperately constructing a new boat from whatever old wood they managed to salvage from their old boat. One can further glimpse this when all the Taiwanese parents stated that they hired tutors for their children after school to help them with English and some "core" courses. One parent even affirmed that tutors were being used to "pressure the kids...to study no matter what" (see section 4.8).

One can see a parallel between the parents' using tutors to further the children's academic achievement in Canada and sending their children to "cram school" in Taiwan. In Sorensen's (1994) report, he indicated Korean parental lack of confidence in the educational system as one reason for over half of Korean secondary school students attending cram schools. In Taiwan, according to Fuligni and Stevenson (1995), 36% of the students in Taipei were enrolled in "after-school academic classes." It seems the same lack of confidence in the educational system, even while it is applauded for its cramming and testing methods, discipline, etc., applies to the Taiwanese parents as they send their children to cram schools in Taiwan and hire tutors for them in Canada. Several local Taiwanese sources mentioned that the parents tend to choose tutors over cram-schools in British Columbia (acknowledging that there are numerous cram-schools flourishing locally), because of their ability and choice to pay for private lessons which are seen as more prestigious and effective than cram-schools.

The children often skirted topics that would cause them to talk directly about their own parents, but still managed to demonstrate their clear observations about their parents' role, adjustment difficulties and anxieties in the advice they gave to future immigrant

families. Nevertheless, many of the children noted through the course of the interviews that their parents have “changed” since their arrival in Canada. One student mentioned that her mother doesn’t “nag” anymore, while another mentioned that his father “won’t bother to talk” to him. A few of the children noted that their parents were “less strict” and were spending “more time” with them. One student acknowledged however, that his parents give him “too much pressure.”

Despite the parents’ emphasis on their desire that their children exit ESL quickly and do well in mainstream classes and their suggestions that the school system reflect a pedagogy similar to the Taiwanese education system, parents’ striking insights concerning their family’s experience reflect a group of concerned parents who are well aware of their own situation and that of their children. Some reflected their sensitivity to their children’s character and feelings with comments as to the child being “shy...suppressed (by the Taiwan education)” or how much their children “like it better here” as well as how much their viewpoints and sense of “home” here influence their children’s viewpoints (see section 4.9).

5.11 Advice to New Immigrant Families

The section on advice to other immigrants in general drew the most enthusiastic responses from both the parents and their children. It seems the families were relieved after talking so much about themselves to have the attention diverted to other immigrants. The students in particular were pleased with the idea of being recognized no longer as the “new” immigrants but the “experienced” immigrants giving advice to “new” arrivals. The pattern of advice by the parents and their children fell generally into the realms of “predeparture” preparation, maintaining good communication with one’s own adolescents and concerns as to expectations and pressures from parents. It is worthy noting that some of the suggestions,

such as encouraging the students to read and make friends with “Canadians”, match those of the “ESL Handbook” produced for ESL families by the local public secondary school.

However, one also notes a contrast between the emphasis of the suggestions to ESL parents and students in the “ESL Handbook” written by the ESL teachers and that of the parents’ advice to new ESL families. The “ESL Handbook” caters understandably to the concerns of immigrant families about the rate of their children’s ESL progress, and emphasizes ways for students to gain English outside of school and at home. It also in particular notes the importance of and ways to “raise teen self-esteem” in a “western” way reflecting the general practices of the teachers, such as treating teens as “individuals”, providing and expressing “unconditional love”, speaking to the teen “like an adult”, etc. (ESL Handbook p.13-17). The concept of “self-esteem for teens” is foreign to the parents who come from the “Confucian” tradition marked with distinctions and levels of culturally prescribed behavior according to status in the society and family, where parents are the authority and children are the “offspring” who, ideally, abide by the wishes of the parents.

In giving advice to new immigrant parents, several parents in the study talked about the necessity of “preparing themselves mentally...have to get information” before leaving Taiwan. “Information” in essence referred to that concerning the local Canadian school system. It appears that such comments stemmed from personal experience such as that of one participant mother who, having tried several times to get more information about local schools, received contradictory information from her local Taiwanese friends. Also one notes a father who commented that the reason the family was “successful in coming here (Canada)” was because “we were preparing ourselves psychologically to come.” He further mentioned that the family came to British Columbia to stay for some time “to let them (the children) know what it’s like.” Consequently predeparture preparation included gathering

information about school and living situations as well as going as far as making personal visits and stays in the location of their future home.

The issue of maintaining good communication with their own adolescents is a significant topic of concern for all parents of teenager regardless of ethnicity. Thus, for the Taiwanese parents and their children to reiterate such concerns as “upbringing” and “relations” with family as important advice to new immigrant parents reminds one of the sharing of common concerns and experiences of all families with teenage children. One mother specifically offered words of caution, using the Taiwanese metaphor that one should not just “lead the cow to pasture,” meaning, just let the children be on their own once they come here; otherwise it would be too late to “pull in their nets,” meaning to put a stop to it, when the parents finally realized they need to do so (see section 4.12.2).

Such sentiments echoed a strong consensus among the teenagers interviewed. Several students even suggested that parents put less pressure on their children and instead “talk to them” more. One student explicitly mentioned that the parents needed to “care more” about their children so that they will be better behaved and not “hanging out.” He referred to the meaning of “care” as that of parents spending more time with their children “talking” to them.

Interestingly, the local “ESL Handbook” did not explicitly emphasize the need for parents and their children to communicate with each other although it suggested the need for parents to “show interest” and help build “self-esteem.”

Having revealed their overwhelming concerns about their children’s ESL and academic progress, the families, and in particular, the teenagers, followed with suggestions to new immigrant parents. One mother expressed a sentiment representative of the Taiwanese parents in general as she voiced her suggestions of encouraging the children to seek more

extracurricular activities such as “play piano, go skating, go skiing” instead of “just studying.” Such an opinion is congruent with earlier discussions of the families’ views on the positive factors of the educational environment in Canada that prompted their move here. Furthermore, one insightful mother warned new parents of arriving with too high expectations of their children. She noted that one should not expect “all their problems will be solved” and urged parents, in particular, to realize that “it’s unrealistic if a child has bad grades in Taiwan that they’ll get good grades here.” A poignant Chinese metaphor one mother used was “the cow which is brought to Beijing is still the same cow.” According to a Taiwanese source, the “cow” symbolizes a “dull-witted” animal and therefore a “not so intelligent” child. Therefore the meaning of the metaphor is that no matter where you take a child who is doing poorly academically, be it “Beijing” or “Canada,” the child will still be the same “cow” (see section 4.12.3).

On the other hand, the teenage participants overwhelmingly stressed that “less pressure” be put on the children for academic achievement. One student even cautioned that the child would “freak out” if pushed too fast into the mainstream classes from the ESL program. Several of the children suggested that instead of pushing their children so much, parents should encourage their children to “integrate into the lifestyle” in British Columbia and, furthermore, that parents should try to “integrate themselves into the lifestyle here” as well as learn the language together with their children.

Again, it is interesting to note that the “ESL Handbook” suggested that for the parents “be supportive and available” and explained the duration of time it takes to learn English well but did not explicitly mention parents needing to lessen the pressure on students.

5.12 Advice to New Immigrant Children

The majority of recommendations to new immigrant students from the families were classified into topics relevant to “family communication and peer influence” and “academic achievement.” Once more, it is interesting to note that such topics were not explicitly noted in the “ESL Handbook.”

Both the parents’ and their adolescents’ primary cautions did not concern academic achievement but rather teenage behavior and communication. They particularly warned new immigrant students against falling in with a bad lot due to peer influence, against “skip(ping) school”, and of the need to communicate with parents and “think of a solution”. One parent talked about how “strange” students were who wore “strange clothes” and whose “hair was purple” (see section 4.13.2). A student suggested that one should not try to change oneself too much and that some kids from Taiwan were “very wild” already. Such remonstrance further reflects the difficulties in adjustment the participant families are encountering “based on their own cultural expectations and norms of behavior” especially for the children coming from the “Confucian” modeled education system to the “progressive” and even sometimes “transformational” school system, particularly in some ESL programs in Canada (Widdowson, 1993, p.264).

Another observation is the number of suggestions the students give for the new students to “make friends with Canadians” in order to speak more English. Such comments are consistent with the suggestions in the “ESL Handbook.” In the interviews, all the students mentioned that they mainly spoke in Chinese and had Chinese-speaking friends, attributing such tendencies to “peer pressure” and the large number of Chinese-speaking students at the local high school. It seems that the suggestions that others make friends with Canadians reflect a strong desire the students themselves hold.

On the topic of “academic achievement,” the participants mainly wanted to give “tips” for success with ESL and understanding the content classes. One father gave his formula for better success in the mainstream classes as he advised that students should come to Canada after the eighth grade. That way they would know the material already and just have to learn the English. It seems such statements, based on a parent’s “naïve theory of parental knowledge” (Seigner, 1983), reflect what Cummins (1991) refers to as the “interdependence hypothesis,” which proposes that “the development of literacy-related skills in L2 was partly a function of prior development of literacy-related skills in L1” (p.77).

The children made many insightful remarks concerning the need to understand one’s anxieties concerning English, the inability to “do everything around you even if you’ve study English in your own country” (implying that it takes time to get adjusted and to be able to function in English), and gave advice for faster improvement of English, such as “speak and learn”, “watch movies”, “study hard”, and “volunteer.” The suggestions all stemmed from their personal experiences as recounted in the interviews.

5.13 A Reflection of Self and Family Adjustments

Throughout the interviews there appears to lurk a deep and troubled feeling of dissatisfaction, loss and discord. The parents’ stories were often intertwined with genuine acknowledgements of the quandary of their own situation as “education immigrants.” Their insightful remarks revealed the parents’ views of themselves as 1) lost while feeling set in their own ways and 2) having to choose between two worlds and two systems of education.

One prominent point that emerges is that, due to their isolation from the mainstream society and their own ability to function adequately within their own ethnic community, the parents do not recognize the need for the process of language socialization and what it

entails. Mohan & Smith (1991) caution one to distinguish between the language acquisition process and language socialization process, citing Schieffelin and Ochs (1986, p.167):

Language acquisition has as its ultimate goal an understanding of what constitutes linguistic competence at different developmental points. Whereas, language socialization has as its goal the understanding of how persons become competent members of social groups and the role of language in the process.”
(Cited in Mohan & Smith, 1991, p.85)

One parent remarked how she didn’t know what to do, especially since there has been encouragement from prominent members of the local Taiwanese community for immigrants to “get down to the ground and grow roots” (see section 4.14). She exclaimed the impossibility of such an idea, noting poignantly that Taiwan “becomes further and further away” already. Another mother eloquently likened her and her husband’s situation to that of the difference between uprooting old trees and young trees. For a tree to replant “when it’s very young it’s very easy to pull it up, however, for an old tree, you have to cut it and when you plant it; it’s hurting” (see section 4.14).

Although the parents realize that it is impossible to transplant “an old tree” like themselves to a new environment and expect it to function properly, they seem to infer that their children, like the “young trees,” would have less difficulty. It seems that they feel that their children have already gone through adjustment in the school environment and have acquired adequate coping skills, a view that differs from the ESL program teachers’ professional opinions and academic research indicating that on the average it takes five to eight years for a non-native speaking student to learn and perform well in academic English (Cummins, 1991 p.78; ESL Handbook, p.15). It is evident that the parents feel that there is no need for a transitional language socialization phase that embraces different ways of learning and a new “academic” identity. For those immersed in Taiwanese culture and society, it would seem that over ninety percent of a child’s “social identity” (Ochs, 1993) is

equated with “academic identity.” One might say that the definition of “social identity” of children is dominated by “academic identity” in Asian countries such as Taiwan, Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Korea (Shimahara, 1986; Stevenson & Stigler, 1992; Tan, 1997).

In the parents’ comparisons of the two education systems, it appears that the parents came to the Canadian school systems generally informed of the type of educational methods they had consciously chosen for their children. They noted the advantages of the education system as being more hands-on, giving “broader experience,” “strengthening individual decision making,” and encouraging outward expression. At the same time, the parents spoke critically of those same pedagogical methods as they modeled their suggestions for a better system after the Taiwanese academic achievement-oriented methods. It seems that as they compared and “weighed” their children’s academic experiences, the balance tipped toward the lock-step, clearly benchmarked, test-oriented Taiwanese type of formal academic learning, rather than the more holistic approach of academic learning and life skills building represented in the local British Columbian education system.

According to a respected local Taiwanese source, it seems that insisting on the transmissional type of curriculum and studying academics is a conscious choice of the parents based on the reasons they emigrated from Taiwan. It is in a sense, a response to insecurity. The instability of their future in Taiwan and even in Canada, which may include political, social or economic and/or educational factors, forces the parents to find sure guarantees for their children’s future. One such guarantee is the solid educational achievement of the children that will give them jobs and a good income. Both the parents and the children indicated their aspirations of entering a “good university” either in North America or Asia. Some parents and students even mentioned the possibility of their children returning to Taiwan after university for work or for “Masters” (see section 4.10.1).

Although not many students elaborated on their insights concerning their cross-cultural education experience, all of the students commented on the “freedom” they feel here both in and out of school. Four students also commented that they have much affinity to Taiwan and intend to return one day after completing their education outside of Taiwan. One student remarked as “very strange” the Taiwanese students who “look like they are in a daze all the time...everyday they have to study” when he visited Taiwan recently. He, like most of the other student participants, said, “As for education, now, I feel that I can learn more here.” It appears that the student participants are following the natural adjustment process and showing increasing preference for the education system in Canada.

5.14 Implications

This study illuminates many critical aspects in the perceptions of recent Taiwanese parents and their high school children of academic achievement and its relationship to ESL learning. Although based upon a small sample drawn from only one sub-group of Taiwanese immigrants, and acknowledging the limitations of such a study, this type of educational ethnographic study is one of the first undertaken of the recently arrived Taiwanese community in British Columbia. It opens another perspective on a significant divergent interpretation of formal educational learning based on cultural differences, implicating a need for teachers’ consideration of “participant’s cultural expectations and norms of behavior” in classroom innovations (Widdowson, 1993). Furthermore, as a part of the “multicultural, multilingual learning community” (Mohan et al. 1996) that includes teachers, parents, students, administrators, educators and community workers, the study represents a voice for a population of concerned parents who are an inextricable component in the process of any educational change. The study may be said to function in a sense as a “market research” that may assist in troubleshooting by illuminating the perceptions of immigrant parents of the

ESL program and the education system. On the basis of reflections, the study illustrates a parallel with the reflective teachings of teachers in the second language classroom as stated in Richards & Lockhart (1994) and Widdowson (1993).

The most revealing aspects of this study are the extreme types of education systems and language socialization the Taiwanese students were experiencing and the consequent depth of the dilemma in which the parents, and in turn, their children are caught. This dilemma results in the parents' advocacy for more "Taiwanese" teaching methods, the more traditional cultural model of education and language socialization, and shorter or no separate ESL programs. These views are directly at odds with many ESL educators' pedagogical beliefs and practices as prescribed by Brown (1994) and Richards & Lockhart (1996).

While expressing caution in regard to generalising from these findings, but assuming that the sample represents the views of a number of Taiwanese parents and perhaps even of Asian ESL parents, how do we seek possible solutions in a spirit of responsible speculation having perceived the "depth of difference" between the teachers' and parents' views regarding academic achievement?

One of the first steps toward seeking a solution is to consider the degree to which such a phenomenon is distinct and whether one can draw parallels and learn from examples of similar dilemmas and conflict elsewhere.

One might heed, for instance, the advice of Charles Taylor, a noted Canadian philosopher. In Taylor's work on multiculturalism, one of the themes of multiculturalism is the importance of recognizing the identities of others and beyond that the special nature of communication between different cultural traditions in a pluralistic society (Taylor, 1992). Taylor commented with regard to the situation between Quebec and the rest of Canada, that "the only way to be together is to recognize the difference" and to "understand the different

sense of belonging.” Furthermore, it is important to realize that “both sides,” in this case, the Taiwanese parents and ESL teachers and the schools, are “trying to climb the same mountain” (Taylor, 1997.) We can safely say that the “same mountain” in this case represents the shared desire that students achieve their best in school and life.

One imperative initial step is to revisit the policy goals set by the education institutions as to how students can achieve their best in school. Examples of the policy goals set by a local secondary ESL program may include: cooperative learning, integration of language skills, collaborative work, building self-esteem, student self-evaluation, etc. The policy goals frame and reflect the ESL teachers’ operating mode, especially with regard to language socialization. The focal points of friction between the ESL community and the teachers are the goals themselves and the means by which students and teachers achieve these policy goals.

The next step, as suggested again by analogy to the work of Charles Taylor, is to “create a climate of confidence and mutual trust” where the parties (the school and the parents) can “communicate their mutual disposition.” Teachers, for example, can review and explain what they are trying to accomplish in the classroom, and by what means, they are attempting to accomplish it, and parents can explain why there is dissatisfaction. This opening of the channels of communication between the parents and the teachers, where there is the recognition of difference can then lead to both parties “accommodating the difference.” According to Constantino’s (1995) study of Chinese parental involvement in the schooling process, success in opening channels of communication that provide a nonthreatening environment to both parents and teachers depends very much on the active “intervention” of third parties, the mediator or the arbitrator, such as Chinese bilingual resource teachers, acting as a “bridge” between teachers and parents.

The resource teacher or “cultural and language” interpreter, or the local school board’s “multicultural worker” can help to alleviate both sides’ concerns before and during a meeting. However, my personal observations of the role of the “interpreter” or the multicultural worker at parent-teacher nights bear out the need for caution as to the selection of an appropriate “third party,” especially in light of possible unspoken dynamics between the third party and the two sides. For example, the use of non-native speakers as translators, or the use of non-native speaker multicultural workers may increase rather than reduce misunderstandings, confusion and tension. Ideally, the third party should facilitate both sides to understand and accommodate the difference.

Beyond accommodating the difference is the step of “building together” (Taylor, 1997). This seems to be the most difficult part of the process, building as it does on the results of prior steps in the process. The critical question is whether, and in what ways, should policy goals having had feedback from both sides be reformulated? What would be the ramifications of introducing benchmark testing in ESL programs and a Province wide standard ESL curriculum? Would following such suggestions made by only one group of recent immigrants be premature, or inappropriate vis à vis other groups? Would such changes to the ESL programs help to validate the existence of ESL programs to the community-at-large and to taxpayers? Would renewed ESL programs so reformulated accommodate the needs of future immigrant groups? In the learning community that also extends to include the community-at-large, what responsibilities are there for the funding and provision of social services to help immigrant parents tackle the tensions and difficulties that are apparent in the studies? Would using immigrant social services to help bridge tensions between parents and schools be a better solution than using home-school workers?

One other fundamentally important question is how much voice parent groups should have in the process of their children's education. This in turn invokes basic questions of educational social philosophy, such as what constitutes a community of learning, and what "equity" parents have as a part of the communities within a school? In striving to accommodate and build together with parents, how can schools find a balanced partnership with parents in school reforms, especially if the reforms pertain to curriculum development, pedagogical methods and educational philosophies? In these days of continual drastic cuts by provincial governments to educational funding, where ESL programs are further marginalized, teachers and schools continue to seek parental support and voice in their struggle to maintain and legitimize special needs or enrichment programs. The dilemma of empowering parents for political reasons, on the one hand, and working toward accommodating parental recommendations on curriculum and pedagogy on the other, is ever-present and requires a redefinition of what a learning community is, especially in a multicultural and multilingual environment.

This study of the Taiwanese immigrant parents' perceptions has brought an important and timely challenge to the ways Canadian schools do things. Taylor's model of creating a dialogue between interlocutors to "negotiate the difference" may seem idealistic and somewhat simplistic, knowing the nature of the deeply entrenched and complex beliefs, values and goals on both sides. However, to prevent the dialogues between the parents and the schools from remaining as a "plurality of conversations", in a state of "a negotiated plurality of criss-crossing and irreconcilable conversations" (Tully, 1994, p. xv), I prefer Taylor's advocating one common mode of conversation which "transvalues" plurality and acknowledges that any satisfactory results for both sides can only be achieved through perseverance, dedication and time consuming efforts on the part of all parties.

It is of urgent importance to continue and expand this type of ethnographic research. Future studies should encompass a broader range and sample of Taiwanese parents from different socioeconomic and immigrant status at different schools in the same metropolitan area of British Columbia, as well as cross-cultural studies with immigrant parents from different ethnic backgrounds.

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APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE

Interviewer's Name:

Date:

Language(s) Used in Interview:

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: (ALL INFORMATION CONFIDENTIAL)

Family Name, Initial of First Name:

Parent : (father/mother)

Child's Name or Initial:

Age:

ESL Class Level:

School:

INFORMANT INFORMATION:

1. Age: ☐ 31-35 ☐ 36-40 ☐ 41-45 ☐ 46-50 ☐ 51+
2. Status: ☐ married ☐ widowed ☐ divorced ☐ separated
3. Most Recent Education Degree:

<input type="checkbox"/> elementary	<input type="checkbox"/> high school	<input type="checkbox"/> junior college	<input type="checkbox"/> vocational	<input type="checkbox"/> undergraduate
<input type="checkbox"/> graduate	<input type="checkbox"/> other			
4. Occupation in Taiwan:

<input type="checkbox"/> own business	<input type="checkbox"/> employed	<input type="checkbox"/> unemployed	<input type="checkbox"/> full time	<input type="checkbox"/> part time
<input type="checkbox"/> student	<input type="checkbox"/> other		<input type="checkbox"/> housewife	<input type="checkbox"/> retired
5. Occupation in Vancouver:

<input type="checkbox"/> own business	<input type="checkbox"/> employed	<input type="checkbox"/> unemployed	<input type="checkbox"/> full time	<input type="checkbox"/> part time
<input type="checkbox"/> retired	<input type="checkbox"/> student	<input type="checkbox"/> other		<input type="checkbox"/> housewife
6. Canadian Immigrant Status:

<input type="checkbox"/> Entrepreneur	<input type="checkbox"/> Investor	<input type="checkbox"/> Independent	<input type="checkbox"/> Self-employed	<input type="checkbox"/> other
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7. Why did you move to Vancouver?

8. How long have you been in Canada?
9. How many of your children have been in an ESL class in Vancouver?
10. What are your goals for your children in the future? In Canada or Taiwan?

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDE

COMPARISON OF EDUCATION SYSTEMS AND CHILD'S EDUCATION PROGRESS

1. What was your child's general educational progress in Taiwan?
2. What kind of student was she/he?
3. What kind of grades did she/he get? (Note: using 'she' instead of 'she/he' below)
4. Did she like her classes at school? Which ones did she like most?
5. What was her typical school day schedule?
6. How do you think the education system was fulfilling your needs and expectations as parents?

Was it fulfilling your child's needs and expectations?
7. What do you think of your child's general educational progress in Vancouver aside from ESL?
8. What kind of student is she now?
9. What kind of grades is she getting now?
10. Which classes does she like most?
11. What is her typical school day schedule here?
12. In what way do you think Vancouver's education system is fulfilling your needs and expectations as a parent?

Do you think it is fulfilling your child's needs and expectations?
13. What do you think is the most important educational difference between Taiwan and Canada?

14. What do you like to see changed or improved in the secondary school program aside from ESL?

PERCEPTION OF CHILD'S ESL PROGRESS AND ESL PROGRAM

1. What do you think of your child's ESL progress at school?
2. What do you think is the purpose of ESL classes at the secondary school?
3. What do you think your child should study to make her ESL better?
4. What do you think of the ESL program at the secondary school?

What are the good points of the ESL program?

What are the bad points of the ESL program?

How do you think it can be improved to help your child improve her ESL more?

5. How do you think the ESL program can be improved to help your child better in her academic achievement?
6. How do you think your child has adjusted to the Canadian social environment inside and outside of her school?

Do you think the ESL program helped? Suggestions for improvement?

7. What language(s) do you and your child use the most at home?

What language(s) does your child use the most with friends? Outside school? At school?

8. How do you help your child to study at home? How is your role now different from when you were in Taiwan?

9. Has your child had private tutors at home? In what subjects?

10. What are your advice to other new immigrant parents?

11. What are your advice to new immigrant high school students?