

TRANSLANGUAGING, INVESTMENT AND GENDERED IDENTITY: A CASE OF  
NEPALI IMMIGRANT WOMEN IN MICHIGAN

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **TRANSLANGUAGING, INVESTMENT AND GENDERED IDENTITY: A CASE OF NEPALI IMMIGRANT WOMEN IN MICHIGAN**

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This study explored the identity of Nepali immigrant women in Michigan from three different theoretical notions: their gendered identity, investment in learning English, and translingual practices. Data were collected using multiple sources: interviews, questionnaires, journal entries, observations and group chats on Facebook. The collected data were recursively read to trace the recurring themes related to the three themes in question. The analysis and interpretation of data were done on the basis of those themes and subthemes to support the research questions. This study yielded three key findings. First, the Nepali immigrant women in Michigan have re-constructed their initial gendered identity after their arrival in the US. Second, they are not only motivated to improve their English but are also highly invested in doing so. Third, they adopt different translingual negotiation strategies for the purpose of meaning-making among linguistically diverse groups of multilingual speakers. They resort to mobilizing their multiple resources to achieve communicative success. The study will be significant mainly for those directly or indirectly connected to ESL classrooms for adult immigrants as these immigrants constitute a substantial proportion of the US population.

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Dedicated to my “Mother”  
in whose aspirations are my inspirations...

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## INTRODUCTION

This study explored the identity of Nepali immigrant women in Michigan from three different theoretical notions. First, their perceived gendered identity and how it has been reshaped after their arrival in the US is investigated. Second, the theory of investment (Norton, 2013), i.e., what sort of language learning opportunities they are investing in is explicated. These women have relatively few opportunities to practice English. They are constructing their identity through interaction at home, school and in the workplace and through symbolic and material sources (Norton, 2013). Third, their translingual practices (Canagarajah, 2013) are investigated. Translingual practices refer to the practices of communication adopted by multilinguals to achieve communicative success among the multilingual speakers with varied linguistic and other semiotic resources. Research studies show that immigrants wish to identify themselves as insiders in the target language community but at the same time they have their transnational relations where they are connected with other immigrants in terms of their ethnicity, religion, language and other aspects (Block, 2009). Therefore, how these women are co-constructing their new relations with the target language community along with maintaining their original identity in the transnational communities is reported. Data were collected through questionnaire, observation, interview, journal writing, and group chats on Facebook. The analysis and interpretation of data were done in line with the selected themes in question. It is believed that the study will be significant to the ESL field as the number of immigrants to the US is increasing day by day. According to the Center for American Progress, the foreign-born population consisted of 40.7 million people in 2012 and women outnumbered men. In 2012, 51.4 percent of the US immigrant population was female.

## CHAPTER 1 LITERATURE REVIEW

### Identity

The social turn in second language acquisition during the 1970s and 80s has brought to the fore a lot of social concepts of language learning. Identity is one such social construct of the study related to learners' sense of self which they construct, reconstruct and negotiate through social interaction. As there is a sense of self, the term is also used interchangeably with 'subjectivities' and 'subject positions' (Duff, 2012a). The idea of subjectivity originates from the philosophical discussions of the self. Great philosophers like Descartes, Locke, and Hume's explanation of 'self' have been included in different disciplines of study. Descartes' much quoted expression "Cogito ergo sum" (I think, therefore I am) helps us understand the notion of subjectivity. In the field of social sciences, the subject refers to "a learner's experience of the subjective aspects of language and of the transformation he or she is undergoing in the process of acquiring it" (Kramsch, 2009, p. 17).

Bonny Norton has been a pioneer in the study of identity. Her seminal work in 1995 brought about a way of looking at how learners' identity is constantly changing and how language learning is so much connected to how language learners view themselves among target language speakers. In other words, there is an integration of an individual language learner and the larger social world and a learner's identity, which changes over time and space (Norton, 2013). A learner may be motivated or unmotivated, introverted or extroverted, inhibited or uninhibited. Norton (2013) mentions that all these are affective or psychological factors but they are "socially constructed in inequitable relations of power, changing across time and space" (p. 2). She also states that their status in a particular setting may make them feel less or more powerful. Identity is said to be constructed in a particular discourse. It is "discursively

constructed” and is “constructed again and again” (Miller & Kubota, 2013, p. 232). As people interact with their surroundings either in their day to day conversation or with people in different settings, they knowingly or unknowingly make sense of those interactions. This process then gradually leads them to modify, change or reformulate their existing sense of self. Learners who are marginalized in one site may be highly valued in another (Norton, 2013). For example, a person may have one sort of status in his/her own country. However, when she or he migrates to a new setting, the previous status may change. Researchers have studied different identity categories from different perspectives: gendered identity, racialized identity, identity of heritage language learners or generation 1.5 groups and so on. The present study focused on Nepali immigrant women’s gendered identity. Though all these different identity categories may overlap to some extent, I mainly focused on the gendered identity of these women in order to explore how their daily activities and access to the English language undergo change after migrating to the US.

### **Gendered Identities**

Gender is seen as a social process which is constructed through relations of power (Pavlenko, Blackledge, Piller & Teutsch-Dwyer, 2001). Since gender is conceived to be constructed, contested, dynamic and non-essentialist in nature, Miller and Kubota (2013) call this type of dynamic nature of gender the ‘gendered identities’. Gender plays a very important role in providing people opportunities to have access to different Communities of Practice (Wenger, 1998). Different social norms and ideologies determine the construction of identity and make the people of a certain gender feel inferior or superior. Being an insider in the Nepali community and a female myself, I have observed how the Nepali immigrant women’s perception of their gendered identity is changing. Being away from their families, they seem to be free from their

ideological boundaries and can live a life where their access to certain communities is less constrained by their female gender. An example of such ideological boundary prevalent in most South Asian countries like Nepal is that women should be involved in household activities only. This study also explored how these women contest their Nepali gendered identities and construct a new sense of self by finding a job where they could work even at night which would be next to impossible for them if they were in Nepal.

### **Brief Review of Relevant Gendered Identity Research**

Drawing on the feminist post-structural theory, a lot of research studies have been carried out to examine identity from the perspective of gender. Kouritzin (2000) conducted a life history study of immigrant women in Canada. She collected data from 19 participants representing 13 different countries- India, Iraq, Iran, China, Japan, Korea, etc. She found that one of her participants could not join English classes because her husband wanted her to stay home to look after the children. It was not due to the unavailability of English classes or the unavailability of child care centers. Instead, it was due to her gendered identity that was assigned to her from her culture that she was not allowed to have access to such opportunities in order to learn the English language. Similarly, Skilton-Sylvester (2002) studied the gendered identity of some Cambodian women in Philadelphia. Some women in her study were asked to discontinue their English classes because their husbands were threatened by their expanding social relations and connections. One participant's husband was threatened by her literacy development and he thought that she would find a boyfriend and run away from home. These two studies show that gendered identity is very much influenced by some cultural and social ideologies that close the door for many females even if they migrate to more developed countries from their original geographical and social spaces. However, it does not mean that women always have such

restrictions. In some other studies, researchers have found that some women had choices and were free to decide whether they wanted to invest in the new language or in their heritage language. In a narrative study conducted by Park (2009), a Korean woman from an economically privileged and well educated background made a choice to retain her Korean identity. She had accompanied her husband to the US and instead of investing in learning English, she invested more in her Korean identity to become a Korean teacher in the US. She had abandoned her PhD studies before she came to the US. The main reason behind her maintaining Korean identity was that she wanted her children to appreciate and maintain the Korean identity and culture.

Using a feminist perspective, some researchers have attempted to explore gendered identity that is enhanced and empowered through learning a language. Following a case study approach, McMahon (2001) found how Japanese women in an English language class experienced being empowered. She collected data from seven participants who attended a class called “Colors of English”, which was organized by “women’s counseling service and publishing house called Femix” in Tokyo (p. 312). They expressed that they could resist their “cultural and linguistic-specific ideologies of femininity” (p. 333). Despite recognizing the “imperialistic nature of English as an international language”; they could use “English as a weapon for self-empowerment” (p. 332). In a similar vein, an interesting study by Gordon (2004) showed the second language learning scenario of Lao immigrant women in Philadelphia. The participants in this research developed their confidence to communicate with the American people and in American culture. They reported that they could even call the police if abused by their spouses. All these studies illustrate how gendered identity was being maintained, resisted, and co-constructed in different ways. In another study related to gendered identity, Mehrotra and Calasanti (2010) explicated how the family unit can be a source of support or a location for

oppression for women. Interviewing 38 immigrant Indian women, they found that even if the family structure is changed after moving to a new place, the existing gender hierarchies in families may still determine the roles and responsibilities that represent the gendered and ethnic identity. The study showed how the family can play a supporting role and how it reshapes the gender inequalities prevalent in Indian families. Together, this body of work suggests that gendered identity of women in different parts of the world is shaped by different cultures, beliefs, social norms, etc. They are given less priority in their societies. However, when they migrate to a new place, many of them gain access to education, and work through English as their L2. Building on these insights, this study investigated how Nepali immigrant women are practicing their gendered identity to have access to English.

### **Transnational Identity and Translanguaging**

In the present globalized world, the size of the immigrant population throughout the world is increasing day by day. The notion of transnationalism has attracted the attention of researchers mainly in the field of anthropology. Transnationalism is viewed as the “processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multistranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement” (Basch et al., 1994, p. 7). The migrant communities also referred to as transnational communities constitute a significant population in the host countries. “Transnational communities are migrant populations living in a country other than their country of origin but with ties to the country of origin” (Tsakiri, 2005, p. 102). They are the people who “have moved across geographical borders and immersed themselves in new cultural and linguistic environments” (Block, 2009, p. 75). The nature of their relationship with their country of origin may differ from group to group and may also be influenced by their use of technology and several other aspects. These types of communities engage in issues surrounding identity as

they are connected to two different countries and cultures. They form different groups or associations due to their multiple identities and the sense of their connection to their country of origin. As they migrate to a new country, they may wish to identify themselves as the target language community but at the same time, they also wish to form such transnational communities to show their bond or connection among immigrants. As they migrate, they carry their own identity in terms of language, culture, religion, ethnicity, gendered ideologies, political beliefs, and so on. However, their identity is reshaped, negotiated and reconstructed through interaction in a new setting and through their changing beliefs. Research studies have shown that migrants have different types of relationships with their countries of origin and the new place where they migrate. According to Lam and Warriner (2012), these relationships are “multilayered and multisited, including not just the countries of origin and settlement but also other sites around the world that connect migrants to their conationals” (p. 193).

Many Nepali women have migrated to India and other Asian and Middle Eastern countries for employment, leaving their families behind. This type of migration has also created Nepali transnational communities. This kind of migration of women is related to Tsakiri’s (2005) idea of feminization of migration. Such associations and transnational communities provide the new immigrants with support and guidance. The present study attempted to look at how the Nepali immigrant women in Michigan maintain their transnational identity and how they are reshaping it. Transnational communities in turn have resulted in new linguistic practices called *translanguaging*.

Before I discuss the notion of translanguaging, elaborating on the term *linguaging* (a term proposed by Swain, 2006) seems appropriate. By linguaging, Swain means “the process of making meaning and shaping knowledge and experience through language” (Swain, 2006, p. 89).

It is believed that there is no such thing as language. Instead, it is through its use in a particular context, language is manifested. From this point of view, languages are not the fixed set of systems but are dynamic systems. “Languages are not fixed codes by themselves; they are fluid codes framed within social practices ... It is not languages that exist, but *discourses*; that is, ways of talking or writing within a context” (Garcia, 2009, p. 32, italics in original). So, a language learner or language user always participates in some discursive practices, which are systemic but dynamic. The use of language, therefore, varies in terms of time and place and even the same person uses the same language in different ways in different contexts. Due to this changing nature of the manifestation of language, it is regarded to be a process (i.e., languaging) rather than a static phenomenon.

Translanguaging is a term mainly used in discussing the use of languages in bilingual language teaching and learning practices. In its original sense, the term refers to the purposeful pedagogical alternation of languages in spoken and written, receptive and productive modes (Baker, 2001, Williams, 1994). The notions of translanguaging and transnational literacies are framed within the concept of ‘sociolinguistics of globalization’ (Blommaert, 2010). By sociolinguistics of globalization, Blommaert refers to language-in-motion rather than language-in-place which is related to the idea of using not only the multiple languages and sources but also the multiple varieties of those languages- vernacular, formal, academic, etc. The use of such multiple sources is highly influenced by such aspects as race, gender, ethnicity, and so on. The origin of the term translanguaging can be traced back to the work of Williams (1994) who first used the term to describe a classroom practice in bilingual classroom where input (listening and reading) and output (speaking and writing) are in two different languages. Garcia (2009) extends this concept and clarifies that “translanguaging or engaging in bilingual or multilingual discourse



practices, is an approach to bilingualism that is created not on languages as has often been the case, but on the practices of bilinguals that are readily observable”(p. 44). Garcia draws this notion of translanguaging from the long studied area of bilingualism/multilingualism and the practices of code-switching in which speakers mix some linguistic features from two or more languages (Gumperz, 1982). Gumperz’s discussion of code-switching was related to such issues as language interference, language transfer, and borrowing. Translanguaging “shifts the lens from cross-linguistic influence” to how multilinguals “intermingle linguistic features that have hereto been administratively or linguistically assigned to a particular language or language variety... translanguaging is thus the communicative norm of bilingual communities” (Garcia, 2009, p. 51). It not only focuses on the use of language but also other modes of communication. The main idea behind the notion is the global-local connections (Warriner, 2007). Collectively, all the above mentioned identities and relationships practiced by migrants make it an interesting area of identity study to explore what, how and why they are connected across national boundaries.

### **Different Interpretations of Translanguaging**

Translanguaging has been defined differently by scholars. It is defined as “fluid practices that go between and beyond socially constructed language and educational systems ... to engage diverse students’ multiple meaning-making systems and subjectivities” (Garcia & Wei, 2014, p. 13). Likewise, it is defined as “the ability of multilingual speakers to shuttle between languages, treating the diverse languages that form their repertoire as an integrated system” (Canagarajah, 2011, p. 401). In a similar vein, Garcia, Flores and Chu (2011) state that translanguaging refers to the “interrelated discursive practices and forms of hybrid language use that are systematically engaged in sense-making (p. 5). All these definitions, however, focus on the diverse linguistic

repertoires and resources that the multilingual speakers have at their disposal and how they make use of those resources for the meaning-making process.

Learners often find it more comfortable to participate in the linguistic and cultural behaviors of their own communities. The social, cultural, political, and linguistic practices they are involved in make them connect to the transnational groups. In some research studies, learners are found to resist their new positions in different ways. Canagarajah (2004a) calls it ‘subversive identities’ when the learners maintain their membership of their vernacular communities and cultures while still learning a second language. However, if the learners really invest in developing their trajectory of identity, they engage themselves in transnational communities (Warriner, 2007) where they go beyond their own linguistic and cultural communities and widen their horizons of practices by participating in other cultures and communities.

In translanguaging, researchers do not look at the linguistic items only that the language learners or speakers use. They also look at other semiotic devices that are used to make meaning in a particular context. This idea comes from such models as integrationist linguistics which was developed by Harris (2009), where the belief is that all the linguistic and any other types of resources that language users use for the meaning making process work integratively. Language users make use of multiple sources for meaning making in their “contact zone”. Contact zone is defined as “social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today” (Pratt, 1991, p. 40).

Canagarajah (2013) mentions that Pratt’s modes initiate a useful shift from a “linguistics of community” to a “linguistics of contact”. It indicates that there has been a shift from the study of language of a particular group of people which is ideally a homogeneous and fixed system to

how a language is really actualized in a particular contact zone. Canagarajah (2013) also states that the label translingual highlights two key concepts: “communication transcends individual languages” and “communication transcends word and involves diverse semiotic resources and ecological affordances”. By the first concept, he means that languages “mutually influence each other” and the second concept means that “communication involves diverse semiotic resources ... treating language as ... a self-standing product, and autonomous in status distorts meaning-making practices” (pp. 6-7). This is a very helpful description of how translingualism goes beyond the ideal perception of perfection in two or more languages. Even different varieties of the same language can be used by a multilingual consciously or subconsciously for the meaning making purpose. What is more important is that all the linguistic and other semiotic resources work in unison. There is also a lot of mixing of different codes within the same situation.

Canagarajah (2013) presents the notion of English as being a translingual entity in the present multilingual world and states:

English is used ... in contact situations....the type of mixing will differ from speaker to speaker according to their level of proficiency in English and according to their language backgrounds. So, speakers of language A and language B may speak to each other in a form of English mixed with their own first languages, and marked by the influence of these languages. Without looking for a single uniform code, speakers will be able to negotiate their different Englishes for intelligibility and effective communication. (pp. 68-69)

This shows that all the learners may not have the same linguistic repertoire at their disposal. However, they are engaged in making meaning and resort to mobilizing their multiple resources which results in translanguaging. In this sense, “meaning is an inter-subjective accomplishment” (p. 69) and “translingual practice therefore calls for a sensitivity to similarity-in-difference ... and difference-in-similarity” (p. 9). Since learners make use of their multiple but not necessarily competent knowledge, they adopt different translingual negotiation strategies.

The four types of translingual negotiation strategies he has presented are: envoicing, recontextualization, interactional, and entextualization. He has described each of these strategies as follows:

Envoicing strategies shape the extent and nature of hybridity, as a consideration of voice plays a critical role in appropriating mobile semiotic resources in one's text and talk; recontextualization strategies frame the text/talk and alter the footing to prepare the ground for appropriate negotiation; interactional strategies are adopted to negotiate and manage meaning-making activity; and entextualization strategies configure codes in the temporal and spatial dimension of the text/talk to facilitate and respond to these negotiations. (p. 79)

Among these four types of translingual negotiation strategies presented by Canagarajah, I have chosen to focus on the "interactional" negotiation strategies while looking at my data. The reason I adopted the interactional translingual negotiation strategies was that I wanted to investigate how my participants make sense of the meaning being conveyed in a particular contact zone and how even their disfluency makes sense through negotiations. According to Canagarajah (2013), an interactional translingual negotiation strategy is:

a social activity of co-constructing meaning by adopting reciprocal and collaborative strategies. The enactment of these strategies is also dynamic. Participants do not necessarily use the same strategies. They are reciprocal in the sense that interlocutors adopt strategies that complement and/or resist those of the other for negotiation of meaning or rhetorical and social objectives. These are largely strategies of *alignment*... ways in which interlocutors match the language resources they bring with people, situations, objects, and communicative ecologies for meaning-making. (p. 82)

From this definition of interactional translingual negotiation strategies, what we can infer is that translanguaging is a social process that takes place in the contact zone of the interlocutors where they seek different interactional means to agree with or disagree with others but all the resources they resort to work mutually.

## **Negotiation Strategies**

Negotiation strategies can be explicit or implicit. They can be self-initiated or other-initiated during interactions. Kirkpatrick (2010) provides some examples of listener-initiated and speaker-initiated strategies. Listener-initiated strategies include: lexical anticipation, lexical suggestion, lexical correction, don't give up, request, repetition, request clarification, let it pass, listen to the message, participant paraphrase, and participant prompts. Speaker-initiated strategies include: spell out the word, repeat the phrase, be explicit, paraphrase, and avoid local/idiomatic reference (Kirkpatrick, 2010, p.14). These strategies help the interlocutors make meaning of a particular piece of discourse through different means. According to Canagarajah (2013), these strategies are “dynamic” and “interlocutors make instantaneous and strategic decisions on how to reciprocate the moves of the other” (p. 83).

## **Brief Review of Relevant Translanguaging Research**

Hornberger and Link (2012) gathered data from the US and international educational contexts to see the translanguaging and transnational literacies. They analyzed their ethnographic data from the perspective of critical sociolinguistics of globalization and commented that translanguaging and transnational literacies in classrooms are ‘not only necessary but desirable educational practice’ (p. 261). They mentioned that students’ multilingual repertoires could provide a rich source of practices in classrooms. Likewise, Alvarez (2014) describes how he regards one of his participants as a language broker between him and the participant’s mother. He was a tutor at the Mexican American Network of Students (MANOS). He sees language brokering as a translanguaging practice in immigrant, bilingual and multilingual communities. He draws from a larger research project into “how emergent bilingualism transformed family relations and structured educational ambitions among MANOS families and mentors” (Alvarez,

2014, p. 328). He collected data from 10 Mexican origin immigrant mothers and 22 children. They were all members of MANOS. From the translanguaging analysis of his comprehensive data, he suggests different ways to incorporate translanguaging practices into classrooms.

Martin-Beltran (2014) conducted a research study in a high school program with the LA (Language Ambassadors) program in the Washington D.C. The aim of this study was to investigate how the students learning English and the students learning Spanish took part in translanguaging through their multiple resources. She collected data from the students with diverse background such as Latino/a, African American, White, Asian, and other race/ethnicities. The data were collected using different data collection tools such as participant observations, student writing, interviews, and audio/video recordings of peer interactions. The researcher adopted sociocultural theory as the conceptual framework and used interactional ethnography and microgenetic analysis to analyze the data. The findings showed that the language-minority students used “more translanguaging and more of their target language than their language-majority peers” (p. 215). The study also presents some uses of translanguaging among the participants: translanguaging to invite others to co-construct knowledge; drawing upon funds of knowledge to defend word choice and deepen understanding; translanguaging: meeting halfway between languages to co-construct meaning; translanguaging to recognize students as multilingual language users; and translanguaging highlights room for growth and future trajectories (pp. 217-223).

Another study by Creese and Blackledge (2010) looked at translanguaging in bilingual school settings. Two researchers were working in two complementary schools in the UK. The cases in this study were from four different communities: Gujarati schools in Leicester, Turkish schools in London, Cantonese and Mandarin schools in Manchester, and Bengali schools in

Birmingham. Two participant children were selected from each school and data were collected through audio-recording of the observed classes, interviews with the participants, their parents, teachers, and administrators. Photographs were also taken along with documentary evidence. Using a language ecology perspective, the researchers noticed that both teachers and students resorted to their bilingual resources in their interactions. Therefore, the researchers advocate “teaching bilingual children by means of bilingual instructional strategies, in which two or more languages are used alongside each other” (p. 103).

All the above studies illustrate that since multilinguals have different linguistic and other semiotic means at their disposal, they strive to negotiate interactions through those different means. They are not only invested in making use of the resources they already possess but also attempt to learn new ways to achieve communicative success. What follows next is the discussion and review on the notion of investment, which is also a theme of this research study.

## **Investment**

It is self-evident that the learners who are motivated to learn the target language learn it better and faster than the less motivated learners. However, the psychological concept of motivation has been studied by second language researchers in terms of an individual character as it is the mental drive that forces him/her to learn a language. The earlier work on motivation can be traced back to the work of Gardner and Lambert (1959) in which motivation was “characterized by a willingness to be like valued members of the language community” (Gardner, 1991, p. 45). Though the studies on L2 learner motivation have attracted attention of second language researchers, what the learner faces when he/she interacts with people and how this interaction shapes his/her identity in a particular setting remains under-explored. Norton’s (1997) exploration of the notion of investment digs deep into the learner’s variable desires to

engage in social interaction. Learners' desire for recognition, affiliation, security and safety (West, 1992) makes them invest in learning and practicing the target language. The type of capital (Bourdieu, 1977) the learners make use of is of paramount importance to study this complex nature of identity construction through real interaction. A learner may be highly motivated to learn the target language but if he/she does not invest in learning and practice it in different possible settings, there may not be successful language learning. In this study, I explored three immigrant Nepali women's investment in learning English. How the gap between their imagined identity (Norton, 2013) and their perception of the self after coming to the US has impacted their investment in learning English was one focus of my study.

### **Brief Review of Relevant Investment Research**

There are a lot of research studies conducted to explore the notion of investment in the field of language learning. McKay and Wong's (1996) two-year long qualitative study of four Chinese-immigrant students in California dealt with the multiple discourses which the participants were exposed to. The data were collected when they were studying in grade 7 and 8. This ethnographic study showed the investment of the participants in their schools and in the US society. Another very intriguing study by Skilton-Sylvester (2002) revealed that the traditional views of participation and motivation of adults are limited as they do not take into account the complex and dynamic nature of the adult interaction and how their investment in learning the language in the classroom and in their daily lives is constructing their identity. Collecting comprehensive data from four Cambodian immigrant women in the US, the researcher showed that their different roles as mothers, daughters, sisters, spouses and workers shaped their investment in learning English in adult ESL classrooms. Likewise, De Costa (2010a) conducted a critical ethnographic study of a designer immigrant student from China. With her exercise of



agency and investment in practicing the Standard English language, the participant became able to identify herself as an academically able student. She wanted to invest in learning English because many big companies in China looked for good English speakers.

In a similar vein, Kelly (2014) investigated the notions of identity, language socialization, investment and power dynamics in L2 English among Burmese women refugees. She collected data from five participants using multiple sources of data: questionnaire, unstructured interviews and the participants' journal writing. She collected data over a time period of three months. Her findings revealed that her participants used English in different naturalistic settings such as while shopping, during medical appointments, at work and several other places. Due to their inability to communicate in English, the participants reported that they experienced different emotional states such as embarrassment, nervousness, sadness, etc. They also reported that they felt they were instilling low self-esteem in their kids because of their inability to help them with their homework. The overall finding was that the participants felt that their low proficiency created a barrier to have access to the American communities. They realized that the solution for this insufficiency was to study English more.

All the above mentioned studies show that immigrants find their identity to be relatively inferior in the new place. One of the main reasons is the lack of the target language proficiency. In my study, I attempted to see how my participants invested in using English learning opportunities to identify themselves in the target language community.

### **Nepali Immigrants in the USA and in Michigan**

The US Census 2000 reports 11,715 as the total number of Nepal born Nepalese residing in the US but the informal estimates made by Non-resident Nepali (NRNs) associations place that figure between 80,000 and 150,000 (Sijapati, 2009). This number has certainly increased

since then due to the growing number of Nepali immigrants who came to the US through the lottery system. The Nepali Americans are primarily located in large cities like New York, Washington DC, Los Angeles and so on. Beyond these areas that have historically received a large South Asian population including Nepalese, the Nepali community has also grown significantly in other areas of the United States.

According to the US Census Bureau (2010), between 2000 and 2010, the South Asian population became the fastest growing major ethnic group in the United States and has emerged in new areas of the country. Over 3.4 million South Asians live in the United States. Indians constitute the largest members of the South Asian community in the United States. However, comparing the Census results of 2000 and 2010, the South Asian community as a whole grew 81% over the decade. The Bhutanese community shows the highest growth exhibiting 82.55% followed by Nepalis, Maldivians, Bangladeshis, Pakistanis, and Sri Lankans. Though the Nepalese represent different languages, ethnic groups, cultures and social strata, the major lingua franca they use is the Nepali language in the US (Dhungel, 1999).

The American Immigration Council cites the American Census Bureau and states that the Asian population in Michigan grew from 1.1% in 1990, to 1.8% in 2000 to 2.5% (242,232 people) in 2011. They comprised 1.1% (or 53,000) of voters in the 2008 election. However, there is no specific data showing the total number of Nepalese in Michigan. In conversation with a Nepali resident who has been living in Michigan for the last 30 years and who has been a faculty member at Michigan State University, I learned that there are more than 25 Nepali families in Michigan. Troy, Detroit, Grand Rapids, Holland, and Ann Arbor are some places where many Nepali immigrants are residing. According to the Migration Policy Institute, in 2012, the foreign born Asians comprised 29.4% and the US born Asians comprised 0.8% of the total population of

Michigan. There is no specific distribution of the Nepali immigrants in the Michigan demographics. However, the number of Nepalis in Michigan is growing as a result of child birth, the electronic diversity visa or the lottery, student visa, and so on.

There have not been many research studies in the Nepali community although the number of Nepali immigrants in the US is growing day by day. Tamot (2008) examined the anthropological concepts of 'self' and 'other' to explore the marginalized identity of Nepali professionals in the US. He explicated the notions of identity and globalization to see how the professional Nepali cadre in the US compared their identities when they were in Nepal and their careers in the US. Through his narrative study and survey data, he showed that a majority of his participants had come to the US to pursue higher education and stayed here after the completion of their study as they were attracted by the opportunities they had seen here. In their view, Nepal could not create any situation to attract the Nepalese elite groups who pursued their higher education abroad. Very few of the research participants wanted to go back to Nepal to use the skills they had learned in the US.

Even though Tamot's study looked at the Nepali community in the US, this study was limited to the elite group and did not explore their identity in relation to the English language learning processes. Many Nepalese women in Michigan were working in Nepal in different positions before their husbands came to the US. Then, they had to accompany their husbands along with their children. Their limited English language proficiency did not help them continue their study nor could they maintain the professional status they had before immigrating. Therefore, many of them are struggling to improve their proficiency in English to continue their studies and/or their professional jobs. The present study is an attempt to look at the role of English in the construction of the participant women's identity in the US.

## **Research Questions**

The data collection process and analysis were guided by the following research questions:

1. How is the gendered identity of the Nepalese women being reshaped after their migration to the US and how does it affect their access to English?
2. What are their investments in learning the conversational skills in English and what impact do these investments have in their overall process of learning English?
3. What translingual practices are these women involved in and how are these practices related to their learning of English for daily communication?

## CHAPTER 2 METHODOLOGY

### Participants

The participants in this research study were three Nepali women living in East Lansing, Michigan. I used the purposive non-random sampling procedure to select my population because it would be difficult to find women who are learning English through random sampling though there are many Nepali immigrants in Michigan. Since the research aimed to look into how their gendered identity, translanguaging, and investment determine their decision to enroll in ESL classes, I purposefully selected these three women: Bhoomika, Ranjeeta, and Shakuntala, who are enrolled in English language classes at the community college in Lansing. The reason only three women were selected was that my focus was on the depth of data collection rather than its coverage. Bhoomika and Ranjeeta were enrolled in level 2 and Shakuntala was enrolled in level 3 at the Lansing Community College when the data collection began.

I have used pseudonyms the participants themselves liked and chose. In the beginning of my communication with them, they had expressed their willingness to be addressed with their original names in the study. However, as our meetings went on, each of them at some point realized that they would not be comfortable being addressed according to their real names. During the meetings, I came to know through informal communication with them that their fear of being recognized by the people familiar to them made them feel uncomfortable, and therefore, they chose pseudonyms. The participants' ages range from 25 to 35 years. All of them are mothers and their children range in age from 2 to 17 years. My main intention behind choosing mothers for this study was to see how multiple roles they play are affecting their investment in English learning process. Most of the time, they use English to communicate with people just

because they have to deal with several different issues related to their children, for example, at the hospitals, at their children's schools, at the child care centers, and so on.

Bhoomika's first language is Nepali. However, she speaks the Doteli dialect of the Nepali language as her first language. Since the standard Nepali variety is the medium of instruction in schools in Nepal, Nepali was like the second language to her. However, for the other two participants, Ranjeeta and Shakuntala, the standard Nepali itself was the first language. All the three participants can speak Hindi as their second language. Each of them started learning English at grade four at their respective schools in Nepal. The participants' length of residence in the US ranges from 4 to 6 years. All of these women are adults who came to the US as dependents of their husbands. Bhoomika, Shakuntala, and Ranjeeta have one, two, and three children respectively. Bhoomika's daughter was born in the US whereas Shakuntala's children, a daughter and a son, were born in Nepal. Ranjeeta's son and a daughter were born in Nepal and the youngest daughter was born in the US. Bhoomika was an undergraduate student in Nepal and was majoring in management in a Nepali-medium college. She was also working as a receptionist at a college. She is now working at a Dollar Tree store. Shakuntala was a nurse at a government aided hospital. However, she could not continue her profession in the US. She has to attend nursing schools, which is only possible after she attains a high level of proficiency in English. She is working as a nanny. Both Bhoomika and Shakuntala are currently employed. On the other hand, Ranjeeta, who was a housewife in Nepal is not employed in the US either. She has three children to look after and her youngest daughter is just two years old. She plans to look for a job after she improves her English and her daughter starts going to pre-school. The following table summarizes the biographical information of the participants:

Table 1: Biographical Information of the Participants

Participant	Age	L1	L2s	Occupation in Nepal	Occupation in the US	Length of residency	Level of Education	Number (age of children)
Bhoomika	25	Doteli Nepali	Hindi English	Receptionist	Dollar Tree Store	4 years	High school (was enrolled in undergraduate course)	1 (3 years)
Shakuntala	38	Nepali	Hindi English	Nurse	Nanny	4 years	Certificate in nursing	2 (15 and 17 years)
Ranjeeta	35	Nepali	Hindi English	Housewife	Housewife	6 years	High school graduate	3 (2, 6 and 17 years)

### Tools for Data Collection

Data for this study were collected from multiple sources for the triangulation process. A questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, journal entries and participant observations were used for the collection of as rich a set of data as possible. Some informal group chats on Facebook were also analyzed. The participants mostly provided me with the journal entries but sometimes they were also engaged in a group chat, where they could share their experiences of communicating in English. The group chat occurred among the three participants and me. Sometimes they would ask me for help related to the incidents they encountered while communicating in English. These multiple sources of data were used to enhance the validity and credibility of the results (Chapelle & Duff, 2003).

## **Questionnaire**

A questionnaire was used to collect the demographic information from the participants, information about their education background, and their family. The participants completed the questionnaire on the first day of my meeting with each of them. (See Appendix A)

## **Interview**

There were 15 interviews altogether over the time period of three months. Each participant was interviewed five times and each interview session lasted for an hour. A semi-structured interview guide was conducted initially. However, the subsequent interview questions were based on the participants' responses. The medium of interview was Nepali. The interviews were tape recorded, transcribed and translated by me, that is, the researcher herself. Literal translation was the mostly used translation technique. However, some expressions were translated through free translation technique because the literal translation would not give the exact meaning that the participants wanted to convey. This was done to translate the proverbs they have used and to make an attempt to preserve the sociocultural meanings they expressed. There was a time gap of at least one week between two interviews with the same participant. The questions for the subsequent interviews with each participant were based on their responses to the previous interview. I would listen to the recorded interview two or three times and make a list of tentative questions to be asked in the subsequent interviews. Most of the questions were open-ended in the subsequent interviews, where the participants were asked to elaborate on the previously mentioned themes and to recall some examples and incidents they remembered from the time of their arrival in the US. (See Appendix B)



## **Journal**

The participants wrote journals at least once a week (for three months – from December to February) in which they kept a record of their reflections on their interactions with their classmates, their teachers, children's teachers, other native speakers of English, and so on. They were asked to write the most intriguing interactions that generated either a sense of success or failure regarding the (un)intelligibility in their conversations and how they felt about that. They were asked to write in any language with which they were most comfortable. They were asked to do so in a diary. After I talked to them and determined that they were comfortable, I created a Facebook chat group of four including me where they could share their ideas. The portions written or posted in the Nepali language were translated by me. The journal entries were in English, Nepali and sometimes in both the languages. (see Appendix C for the journal writing template)

## **Observation**

I made field notes of the behaviors or interactions that are related to the theoretical concepts in question. I spent at least a day with each participant to observe their behaviors in daily life. I called it 'A Day in the Life of X'. I joined them in their household activities and also accompanied them to the grocery store. I observed their linguistic behaviors when they communicated with their children at home. This was mainly done to see if the responses elicited from interviews really matched their day-to-day behaviors and practices and to explore their real language practices. The participants gave me permission to do that.

## **Procedure of Data Collection**

As mentioned, I purposefully selected three women from the Nepali immigrant community living in East Lansing. I visited the participants and explained my research to them. They were asked to sign the consent form. The questionnaire was given to them to answer on the day of my first meeting with each participant and I explained the questions to them, when needed. Then, the journal writing template was given to them and was explained to them. Looking at their time availability, the first interview date was scheduled and each subsequent interview was scheduled after the interviews. I met with each participant at their apartments. The interviews were rescheduled a couple times due to some conflicts in the participants' schedules. The interviews were tape recorded, transcribed and translated within one week after each interview so that the emerging themes would guide the subsequent interview questions. I spent at least one day with each participant at their homes and also accompanied them to the grocery store. I wrote field notes by hand. The incidents and the participants' use of language related to the selected themes were written on the same day in the evening. Whenever I observed some interesting incident or conversational exchanges, I would type some words in my mobile message box and would save it in the draft folder to remind myself of the incident while writing about it later. Except for some special Nepali cultural terms and expressions they used, other things were written in English.

The following table summarizes the data collected from the participants through multiple sources, which were collected over a period of three months:

Table 2: Summary of Data Collected

Participant	Questionnaire	Interview	Journal entries	Facebook group chat	Observation
Bhoomika	1	5	18	19 (initiations) 187 (exchanges)	Two days
Shakuntala	1	5	16	14 (initiations) 146 (exchanges)	Two days
Ranjeeta	1	5	14	7 (initiations) 63 (exchanges)	Two days

### Researcher Positionality

Though a researcher is an important part of a research study, few studies have explored researcher identity. In an ethnographic case study of a male Hmong refugee, De Costa (2010b) found himself in three researcher positions: researcher as outsider or insider, researcher as resource, and researcher as befriender (p. 524). Similarly, in Norton and Early's (2011) analysis of narrative data, they found four researcher identities most commonly recurring: researcher as international guest, researcher as collaborative team member, researcher as teacher, and researcher as teacher educator. In the present study, I find myself an insider in the community. Recently, I was appointed as the President of the Nepali Students' Association of MSU and we organized three different Nepali festivals in the East Lansing Nepali community. I have also attended some ceremonies such as the rice feeding ceremony, worshipping the deities, special festival dinners, welcoming the newcomers to East Lansing, and birthdays. During the festivals, I helped some women wear a 'Sari', a special 5 meter long Nepali dress, danced with them and sang Nepali folk songs to identity myself as an insider, not just a graduate student. They changed the term of address for me from 'Hima madam' to 'Hima didi' (Hima sister). The former is a very formal term that is used to address a female teacher in Nepal and the latter is used to

address sisters, cousins or close friends. Since my participants are also a part of this group, I was able to elicit in-depth data over a period of three months.

To conclude, data for this study were collected from three participants through multiple research tools over the time period of three months. Interviews, observations, and questions in the questionnaire were all guided by the three themes in question: gendered identity, investment, and translingual practices. Though an interview guide was used to initiate the conversations with the participants, all the subsequent interviews were guided by their own responses. This was done to dig deep into the participants' experiences. In addition to this, I also attempted to see if the beliefs and perceptions held by the participants were actually found in their real life practices.

## **CHAPTER 3 DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

### **Data Analysis**

The analysis of data started during the data collection process as qualitative data analysis is concurrent with data collection and management (Saldaña, 2011). The interviews were transcribed within a week of the interview schedule so that the recurring themes, patterns, and categories would be listed or merged according to their occurrences. Data analysis followed an iterative, spiraling, or cyclical process (Creswell, 1998) as there was the identification of the codes and categories, restructuring of them as the data appear and cross referencing. Codes are defined as the “names or symbols used to stand for a group of similar items, ideas, or phenomena that the researcher has noticed in his or her data set” (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999 as cited in Baralt, 2012, pp. 222-223). I adopted both deductive and inductive reasoning. In deductive reasoning, we draw from established facts and evidence whereas induction follows from particular to general and so we induce from the evidence available (Saldaña, 2011). The analysis was deductive in that the identification of codes and themes was guided by the theoretical notions of gendered identity, investment and translanguaging. At the same time, some recurring examples led to the discussion of related but new themes, and therefore, it was inductive too. In fact, I had expected patterns, categories, or themes to evolve as data collection proceeded rather than imposing them a priori (Chapelle & Duff, 2003, p. 175). I focused on the emic perspective (Chapelle & Duff, 2003; Friedman, 2012) to dig deep into the participants’ behaviors and practices. Pseudonyms of the participants were used to maintain confidentiality. After the analysis, ‘member checks’ (Duff, 2012a; Friedman, 2012) were done to find out if any of the participants was not willing to share some data.

This chapter presents the analysis of data collected from different sources: questionnaires, interviews, journal entries, observations, and Facebook interactions. I translated all the data into English. All the data were read and re-read to analyze them in line with the research questions. First, the recurring themes related to the research questions were located throughout the data. This recursive process was adopted to find the themes in terms of the words the participants had used, for example, the use of specific recurring adjectives, nouns, verbs, and adverbs because during the data collection process I had realized that they were always trying to find some content words to express their feelings. Similarly, the excerpts in terms of phrases, clauses, sentences, proverbs, and even small paragraphs were found to support the themes in research questions.

## **Results**

The results of the study are presented in the following subsections in line with each research question.

### **Gendered Identity**

Research Question 1: How is the gendered identity of the Nepalese women being reshaped after their migration to the US and how does it affect their access to English?

There have been numerous studies related to gendered identity in the field of sociology and anthropology. There are some studies in the field of second language learning too, especially in learning English as a second language. This study looks at the gendered identity of the three participants: what their initial identity was before they came to the US; what had made them form such identity; how it has changed, if it has changed; how they view the relationship between their female identity and their access to the English language. Based on the thorough analysis of data collected from multiple sources, I came up with some common subthemes related to the participants' gendered identity and how it had been reshaped and reconstructed.

The subthemes that support the theme “gendered identity” were: their initial self of their female identity and its source; men’s support at home both in Nepal and in the US; their changing views toward their gender; effect of their gender in the access to English; English as an empowering tool; and the lack of English attributed to being a woman.

### **Their Initial Female Self**

Data showed that all three participants had mixed feelings about being women. On the one hand, they were happy with the fact that their religion has praised the existence of women in the universe. They are worshipped in different forms of Goddess. On the other hand, my participants also experienced that their inferior feeling towards their own gender was not imprinted in them when they were born. Instead, it was implanted in them by society and family through verbal and non-verbal behaviors. The following excerpt from Shakuntala’s interview indicates her mixed feelings:

I think being a woman in itself is a matter of pride. We are the creators. Our Hindu religion defines women as *Naari Shakti/ Srijak* [woman is energy of the universe and a creator]. However, I felt bad whenever I thought of being away from the place I was born, my parents’ house.... From the childhood, I was made aware of the fact that I was a woman. If I used to wake up late, they would say that I was “*arka ko ghar jane jaat*” [born to go to other’s house]. So, I was not supposed to wake up late. I was not supposed to leave the dishes and clothes unnoticed as my brothers would do. I was not supposed to do this and that. There were always more “not supposed to do” things than “supposed to do” [laughs].

This excerpt shows that Shakuntala has mixed feelings of being a woman. She thinks that a woman is the creator and therefore, she is supposed to be praised. This sentiment was supported by the field notes I had made when interviewing the participants. The data from the field notes indicate that Shakuntala enacted the gesture of being powerful by stretching and raising her hands and with the change in her facial expression. I could understand that she was proud of being a woman. However, her use of the often said Nepali expression “*arka ko ghar*

*jane jaat*” indicates how peoples’ frequent use of some proverbs and sayings sow the seeds in a woman’s mind that she is born to go to her husband’s house. Similarly, Bhoomika also had mixed feelings regarding her initial self of her gender. The following excerpt from interview data states:

Being a daughter sometimes made me feel happy because you can wear beautiful jewelry and colorful clothes. You are regarded to be *Laxmi* [the goddess of wealth]. However, there are many such incidents in everyday life when you are made aware of the fact that you are a woman. You can’t do this, you can’t do that. You need to be protected every time.

Bhoomika’s feeling is that the words used by people around made her feel that she was a woman. She also expressed her feeling that she was always sad because just because she was a girl, she could not stay with her parents. She said, “I used to feel bad being born as a daughter. Not because I was jealous of my brothers but because they could stay with my parents even after their marriage but we, the girls had to leave our parents’ house after marriage.” The third participant “Ranjeeta” has similar feelings but she seems to be more irritated with the language that is used to train daughters from the very beginning. She also thinks that being a woman indexes an inferior gender as a result of the people’s words, restrictions, and, rules most of which are made for females only. The following excerpt clearly indicates her expression of the source of her initial self:

“*Chhori manche ko jaat le yesto garnu hudaina*” [girls are not supposed to do this]... not only me but my sisters and all the females in our society back in Nepal listen to the same line so many times a day. When we listen to the same sentence day by day and many times a day from our family members, teachers, neighbors, and relatives, it becomes our own way of thinking who we are... women can’t do this, women can’t do that... women can’t eat, walk, talk, laugh like this or that... women can’t plough the field... women can’t blow the conch shells... women can’t stand while brushing their hair, women can’t eat while stretching legs [smiles].



This excerpt includes so many examples of what the commonly held beliefs about women are. This also shows her frustration towards the source of the formation of the initial self as a woman. She also said, “They never tell boys what not to do”. Her frustration was not with the rules but with the way they were phrased: all negative sentences. When I asked her what she meant by that, she said, “You can say the same thing in positive way too, like for example, this is good to do ... and they could be for both daughters and sons ... the rules should be the general moral rules that are applicable to all genders”. The above excerpt and her other expressions directly show that the language that was used by the people around her was the major source of developing inferiority among females.

### **Gendered Identity: Perceived in Relation to Assistance at Home**

I observed an interesting and common use of a term “*joitingre*” in all the three participants’ expressions when they were sharing their experiences about how their initial self of their gender is also associated with the household work they used to be involved in. The term “*joitingre*” means wife’s servant, which has a negative connotation in the Nepali culture. Shakuntala’s following excerpt shows that taking care of all the work at home is related to her being a woman:

When I was in Nepal with my family and in-laws, I had to do all the work on my own. My other sisters-in-law would help me with the household work but the males? No way. They do not even turn the utensils upside down. What I mean to say is its all females who had to cook, do dishes, feed the cattle, go to the jungle to cut grass and bring firewood, wash the clothes of the whole family, [whispers- we do not have washing machines there]. Even if a husband wants to help his wife in the household work, others make fun of him. They call him “*joitingre*” [wife’s servant].

The second participant, Bhoomika, also had similar feelings and she thinks that it was better to divide the work among all the females at home rather than assigning some work to men.

However, her frequent use of the term “we” refers to all the women and not only to her own female identity:

The men do not usually help with the household work in Nepal... They are called “*joitingre*” [wife’s servant]. Though these days, some men help a bit but “we” don’t like them to do household work. They go to office to earn for the family and therefore, they just deserve rest at home. No work. “We” are brought up in such tradition from the very beginning that all the work at home like sweeping the floor to cleaning, cooking, and everything are females’ duty and responsibility. You know, this is just a feeling. Even if men want to help, females stop them from doing so either because they feel bad for them or are afraid of other seniors at home. The most important thing is that we had a joint family and so there were many females to work: mother, aunts, cousins, and so on.

Though both the above participants had used the word “*joitingre*” [wife’s servant] in their response to the question of why men are not responsible for assisting with the household work, the third participant, Ranjeeta, produced the word only after I asked a subsequent question based on her responses. Initially, her response was similar to Bhoomika’s regarding the division of work among females at home. In response to my question “What if men want to help?”, she replied that their ego gets hurt when the word “*joitingre*” [wife’s servant] is used to address them, especially when they help their wife. The following excerpt from the interview data clearly indicates her belief that assisting with the household work is inappropriate for men:

R: I was married off at an early age. My husband went to India to work and to support the family financially. I had to cook for a very large family but the other female members of the family would support me. Actually, we would divide our work among all the females at home. I would cook; my sister-in-law would look after the cattle, feed them, milk cows; my mother-in-law would look after the children and feed them; then we all would wash the clothes together in the river nearby the village ...

H: What about the males at home? Did they help?

R: No, sometimes but you know that is not regarded to be appropriate. Men do not cry, men do not cook and clean. Men are born to be bold and to protect the family and not to waste their time in all these small household things.

H: What if they want to help?

R: [laughs] their ego gets hurt when someone calls them “*joitingre*” [wife’s servant] [laughs].

The above data suggest that the participants’ long held beliefs about their gender is associated with the social and familial responsibilities assigned to them. They do not see any harm in taking all the responsibility of the work at home; however, they perceive the lack of involvement by men in housework is grounded in their belief that they would be negatively viewed as “*joitingre*” [wife’s servant]. The linguistic term seems to have great influence in the social customs which in turn play a role in women’s formation of their identity to be responsible for all the work at home.

In my interview with Ranjeeta the next time after about a week, I was going to ask her different questions. However, before I could begin asking her questions, she told me that she wanted to add something related to our previous interview and her responses to my questions in the interview. She said that she used to be very happy when her grandmother would tell her stories about the great women from the Vedic literature [ancient Hindu philosophy]. She was so excited to say that to me that I could not stop her from saying that. The following excerpt adds to what she views about the differences between what people say and actually do:

I still remember the examples that my grandmother used to give me... the examples from the Vedic literature [Hindu philosophy]. A woman should be as chaste as “Sabitri”, as patient as “Sita”, as tolerant as “Draupadi”, as sacrificial as “Gandhari”, as selfless as “Radha”, and so on. Sometimes I wonder why these women described in the mythology sacrificed a lot in their lives. They should have raised their voice [laughs] and should have set themselves as models of bravery ... that would make our lives easier [laughs] ... they are all worshipped even by our men... there are temples dedicated to those forms of goddess... but in real life the same men treat their mothers, daughters, wives, in different way... After all stories are stories... hard to follow in the real life.

From this excerpt what I understood was that the participant's formation of her initial female self was not only determined by the language used by people in the society, and their behaviors, but also by the differences between men's thinking and doing. On the one hand, the men worship the goddesses and dedicate temples to them. On the other hand, they treat the living women at their homes as if they are the low class living entities. In sum, the participants' initial perceptions of their gender was constructed and shaped by several different factors.

### **Change in the Initial Self: Equality Experienced**

During the subsequent interviews with the participants, I came to know that their initial formation of their gendered identity had changed and was still in the process of being restructured. It took them some time to deny the fact that being a woman is not attributed to any restrictions, and beliefs. Shakuntala thought that even in Nepal the beliefs and attitudes of women towards themselves were changing and she thought that it was due to education and access of women to different fields of study. She gave credit to the English language as it plays an important role and is a key to open the door of golden opportunities. She said, "People are educated these days and even in Nepal women are treated in slightly better way. Many women have been to English speaking countries and have obtained their higher degrees from the US, the UK, Canada, and so on." Though she thought that access to English had provided the women with unlimited opportunities, she was concerned about the women in remote parts of Nepal and added, "... in many remote parts of Nepal, they are still treated as the lower class humans." In a similar vein, Bhoomika stated that the formation of gendered identity is subject to change. She even gave examples of two very characteristic examples of how the social situation has been changing. In an interview, she said:

The situation has changed so fast that just in a few years we can see that women have more freedom than 10 or 15 years ago... so many love marriages... late marriages... education... work... they can travel alone... even DIVORCE is being accepted in the society.... I still remember the story of “*Sati Pratha*” [a custom where a wife had to burn herself alive if her husband died before her].

In the above excerpt, I have capitalized the word ‘divorce’ because my field notes show that she had produced the word with more stress and emphasis along with different facial expressions. When I asked her why she focused on divorce, she said that divorce would have been taken as worse than death some years ago. A divorcee would be looked down on but today it has become a way out if the marriages do not work. What is more interesting in the above excerpt is that in our further discussion, she also gave an example of “*Sati Pratha*” in Nepal a century ago, where a wife had to burn herself alive in her husband’s cremation process. On the other hand, if a wife would die, the husband could remarry after some months. I could see the changes of emotions on her face during this interview. Ranjeeta agreed with Shakuntala and said, “Change is happening but only in some cities and bigger places not in all Nepal. Parents are investing in their daughters’ education now-a-days. I like this change. So what we could not enjoy such opportunities? [laughs] the present young generation is lucky.”

Though Shakuntala explicitly said that the opportunities provided to women due to the access to English have played some role in the restructuring of gendered identity, Bhoomika and Ranjeeta gave credit to education in general. As a consequence of a recurring theme of *difference*, in the data gathered from the three participants, I further came up with some excerpts which indicate that all of them view the US as a different world. By “different”, they mean no discrimination. Shakuntala said, “Here? in the US? Women are not the lower category. The picture is *different* here. What should I say? How should I describe my experience? It’s a *different* world.” Likewise, Bhoomika with her smiling face a couple of times within the same

question stated, “[smiles] umm... the first world country... everything is *different*... It’s a *different* world. I feel like I was born again [smiles]. Similarly, Ranjeeta’s statement is in line with both the above participants and she gives some nouns to elaborate what different means to her, “It’s totally *different* here in the US. Men and women are equal... equal in work, education, prestige, power, [smiles], confidence, energy, everything”.

### **Freedom: Work, Food, Cloths, and Driving**

Bhoomika’s use of the expression “I feel like I was born again” in the above mentioned excerpt indicates that her perception towards herself is no longer the same. All the participants admitted that they had already changed their view towards themselves and were still in the process of reshaping and reformulations. The other very interesting phenomenon I noticed in all three participants is that they also associated their changing view with “freedom”. By freedom, they meant mental freedom. They had associated their mental freedom with four different aspects: working even late night; choices in wearing clothes; eating food even before other members of the family; and most importantly being able to drive to school and work.

The first among the four commonly recurring themes is their feeling towards their work and staying out late for work, Shakuntala said, “I go to work anytime as per my schedule. I come home late... I am surprised that “I” the same person had a different feeling toward being a woman in Nepal. I had so many ‘not to do’ things. I feel mentally free here in the US. My husband supports me regarding my work. I feel *empowered*.” Similarly, Bhoomika related her feelings with her earlier mentioned feeling of being happy as a woman and disclosed, “Being a female is not a stigma in my heart. I loved being a female but I am happier to be a female in such place like America where you are not treated as belonging to lower class.” On the other hand, Ranjeeta did not go out to work but still she felt mentally free as she did not feel stressed and

obliged. Rather, she enjoyed doing household work now. The following excerpt shows what she thought to have mental freedom:

I don't work because I am too busy with my three kids that I have so much to do at home. I mostly stay at home but I have more mental freedom even if I don't go out to work. I like doing all the household work but don't feel stressed and obliged. How different is this feeling, *isn't it?* The same work was like a burden in Nepal not because I wanted to rebel but because I was so much under duress... what if I made a mistake? How should I make everyone happy? How can I work efficiently at home? All these questions used to fill my mind. [gesture towards her head] I feel light now [smiles], *isn't it?*

In this excerpt, Ranjeeta's use of the tag "isn't it?" is the direct translation of a fixed and frequent tag question in Nepali, which is used to request confirmation and also demands listener agreement.

Second, the participants associated their mental freedom with their choices to wear any type of clothes they felt comfortable. Regarding this, Shakuntala said, "I can wear comfortable clothes. Wearing pants and t-shirts would be perceived negatively in Nepal, especially after you become a mother, which is not the case here in the US." Bhoomika viewed her choice to wear clothes differently, however. In response to a question whether it is the matter of convenience or not, she said, "I still feel wonderful to wear traditional Nepali jewelry and outfit but it is not so convenient. I feel odd when I wear them and go out. All people look at me as if I am from a different planet. ... I love to wear Nepali dress in festivals and when I go to temples." Like Shakuntala, Bhoomika also felt comfortable to wear pants and jeans but she still loved to wear Nepali dress. The reason she had limited the use of her traditional clothes was that she used to be stared at. Ranjeeta had similar feelings but she associated her choice of wearing western clothes with convenience; however, the more important thing is she thought that it was not a stigma. The

following excerpt from the interview data shows her mental freedom and her changed perspective:

You know what? I had never thought that I would wear pants and jeans one day. I would always feel good in Sari... That way I thought I was not bringing a shame to my family. However, now that I wear pants, I feel so comfortable. Above all, I don't feel that it's a shame. It's so convenient... saves time and effort [smiles]. I wear the Nepali traditional dress only in the festivals and gatherings as you do [smiles].

Third, the participants' perception of their mental freedom is connected with their choice to eat anytime. Shakuntala said, "I can eat before my husband and children if I have to leave early, which was not the case in Nepal. If you are at home, women eat after all the men finish eating. Otherwise, your parents would be blamed for not teaching you good manner [smiles]". Whereas Shakuntala's frustration was with the Nepali culture where a woman's parents were blamed for not teaching good manners, Bhoomika felt happy because she even linked her freedom with eating anytime she liked and taking a nap anytime, which was interesting. Though she had freedom, she did not want to enjoy the freedom as she did it from her heart. She said, "I can eat whenever I like, I can take a nap whenever I like [smiles]. My husband tells me to eat and not to wait for him if he is late but I just feel good to wait until he comes. I don't do that under mental pressure but I love doing that now." On the other hand, Ranjeeta asked me a question to confirm her change in perception. In the following excerpt from the interview data, she said:

I do not feel obliged to wait for my husband to eat. I have to feed my children many times a day when they are at home. So, I eat whenever I feel like eating. My husband does not feel it offensive if I eat before him. Isn't it amazing?... how the same person's habits, behaviors, and feelings change according to place [smiles].

From all the above quotes and excerpts, I noticed that the participants think that our attitude to our perception of self and even our behavior towards others changes in terms of time



and space. The fourth aspect of the participants' reshaping of their changing gendered identity has to do with their ability to drive in the US. Shakuntala remembered her first day of driving in the US and mentioned how she felt bold to have done that. She said, "I DRIVE to work. I sometimes drop my children to school and my husband to his work. The first time I drove a car in the US, I felt so bold. I mean I don't have to depend on anyone to drop me and pick me up. Instead, I can do that for others. And it's an amazing feeling." Similarly, Bhoomika said, "My husband bought me a car. I drive to my ESL classes, to work, and everywhere. I feel independent." In a similar vein, Ranjeeta said, "I have got a driver's license. I don't drive often because I don't often go out but I feel happy to be able to DRIVE a car on my own. I feel empowered [smiles]." Though the three participants Shakuntala, Bhoomika, and Ranjeeta use the words "bold", "independent" and "empowered", their ability to drive contributed to the consolidation of an empowered identity.

Apart from the above mentioned four concepts of their mental freedom, the three participants also compare their husbands' assistance with the household work. Shakuntala thought that it was not only her but her husband was also mentally free to help her. In the following excerpt, she said:

[laughs] it's totally different. There is no such thing as men should do and women should do. My husband helps me in any household work when he is at home. I think *he is also mentally free now* [laughs] because there is no one to scold him when he helps me. Not only my identity has changed towards myself but his attitude has also been more positive and supportive. Time and place have brought so much happiness in the family and relation ... no obligations.

She gave credit to the changing time and place which had changed the roles and responsibilities at home. On the other hand, Bhoomika focused on the hypothetical situation and said that the situation would be different if they were in Nepal. She said, "There is nothing like

who is supposed to do what ... He is very supportive of everything. I think his behavior would be different if we were in Nepal. ... We both believe in doubling our happiness and reducing our pains by sharing our work, feelings, and taking equal responsibility of everything.” Likewise, Ranjeeta with her smiling face said, “In spite of my husband’s busy schedule, he helps me when he comes home. He plays with the children, feeds them, cleans, and does other work too. I do not feel like a donkey anymore [smiles].” Her use of the word donkey here signifies that she is not under duress of taking responsibility of everything at home.

### **Restructuring and Reshaping Gendered Identity**

One of the interesting sides of the participants’ perception that I noticed was how they believe that they are reshaping their identity through their behaviors and changing expectations for their own daughters. I observed the similarity between the responses to my questions and the actual behavior in Shakuntala’s daily practice. In an interview, she said, “I teach my daughter good manners but don’t make her feel that she is born as an inferior human. My daughter and my son are treated in the same way. If my daughter cooks, my son does the dishes. I don’t want my son to have such ingrained beliefs that he is not supposed to help his sister, and later his wife. I want to see my daughter live her life.” When I was at her home to spend a day with her, I saw that her son was doing the dishes. In other occasions also, I observed that she was practicing what she had told me. Ranjeeta had the similar opinion and said, “...we don’t treat our son and daughters as two different classes but as our children. I had the same pain when giving birth to all of them [smiles]”. The reason for her equal treatment to all her children is associated with her similar feelings while giving birth to all of them. On the other hand, I encountered a small but a different incident at Bhoomika’s house. In her interview data, she had said that she does not care

much about whether the child is a son or a daughter. The following excerpt indicates her changed belief:

I don't know why a mother is so much attached to her daughter. My daughter is so young now but I am already worried about her future [smiles] it's a positive worry. We have only one daughter as our child and our in laws have already started talking about giving birth to a son ... Okay we can plan but is there any guarantee that the second child will be a son? [laughs] me and my husband are not worried about son or daughter. We are happy with our daughter. We want her to enjoy all the freedom which she might not be able to do if she was raised in Nepal.

While the above excerpt shows that she is very much concerned about her daughter's future, she is happy having a daughter. On one occasion, however, I observed that her daughter was messing things up and running here and there in the room. Suddenly, Bhoomika said, "*Haina kasto choro manche jasto cha bhane yo ta? Ali shanta bhayera basnu parcha ni...*" [Oh no, she behaves like a son. Can't you keep quiet?]. This sentence coming from her subconscious mind still shows that a daughter is supposed to be quiet. In response to my question why she had said so, she replied, "Freedom does not mean you behave like a boy. The characteristic feature of a girl is her humility and calmness. It's like her ornament." The difference in the stated belief and the actualization of that belief was indeed jarring. I think there are still some remnants of this perception in our culture.

The above discussion indicates that the participants had consciously made a connection between their initial self and the changing self across time and space. Although their changing gendered identity was associated with such ideas like their freedom to wear clothes, and drive a car; they expressed that education as a whole and English in specific had contributed to the restructuring of their identity. Therefore, what follows next is the discussion on the relationship between their changing identity and their attitude towards English. How their attitude towards

the importance of English made them invest in learning and improving their English conversational skill and how they adopted different negotiation strategies will also be discussed in the subsequent subsections.

### **Changing Identity and Attitude towards English**

To elicit the participants' attitude and access to English, my questions ranged from what their initial motivation to learn English in Nepal was, whether it changed in the US to how they viewed English today. Regarding their initial motivation to learn English, each of them had different forms of instrumental motivation. Since Shakuntala was working as a nurse in a hospital, the importance of English for her was limited to the hospital and to passing the exams. In the following excerpt from one of my interviews with her, she said:

English is important everywhere in the world but it was not that important for me for communication in Nepal. All I needed English was for achieving pass marks in the English subject in my exams at school and college... I also needed to learn the names of medicines, vaccines since I was working as a nurse. I had to understand the doctors' handwriting in English... what else? That's all. I did not need English to communicate with my family, friends, neighbors, and relatives.

On the other hand, Bhoomika's initial motivation was connected with what Shakuntala said, i. e., to pass her exams. However, it was also connected with her pride and honor. She said, "I could not speak in English fluently... but I knew that English was connected with my self-respect and honor rather than for communication in English." Similarly, Ranjeeta did not dig deep into how she felt about English but mentioned that she wanted to be fluent in English even if she was a housewife because she knew that one day she might need that at least to appear for the visa interview to come to the US.

Although the participants' use of English was very much limited in Nepal, their perceptions towards English after they arrived in the US were expressed through their different experiences on different occasions. The following excerpt from an interview with Shakuntala shows how her initial motivation and attitude towards English changed after her arrival in the US:

English is a must here in the US. I can communicate with my family in Nepali but I can't communicate with others in Nepali whose first language is not Nepali. I could no longer escape from communicating in English in the US. There was no other way... Learning English would make me a smart woman in Nepal but here it is more related to survival than to your being smart woman.... Whatever I knew about English was like a drop of water in the ocean. Sometimes I felt as if I had to start from the scratch. If you talk about work, then it is like do or die... Speak in English or stay at home.

This excerpt shows that her initial knowledge of English was not very helpful for her to communicate. Her use of the phrases "like a drop of water in the ocean" and "starting from the scratch" show that she was experiencing the lack of proficiency in English. Her motivation was also related to work, which is instrumental: to "do or die". On the other hand, Bhoomika's experience of her first day in the US itself made her feel "small". She said:

When I first entered in the US, I had thought that only white people speak English and all other people would be like me. The first time I was shocked was when I was at the Detroit airport, I was waiting for my husband who had gone to check our tickets to East Lansing. I saw a ... [exact word deleted] man of color speaking so fluently in English that my worry about not being fluent in English reached to the top of the mountain. I felt so small. I thought what I would do, how I would communicate with the people in the US, and so on... I was already tired of jet lag, but this thought of my lack of fluency in English made me feel dizzy in the airport... a sad feeling on the very first day [laughs].

The above excerpt includes expressions which were not like what she had expected. Her use of the term "worry reaching to the top of the mountain" means that she was too much anxious at the airport itself. Her feeling of dizziness might have been the result of jet lag, but she

linked it to her level of anxiety she had experienced at that very moment. Ranjeeta had a similar feeling of her first day in the US. Her anxiety was related to her inability to understand a taxi driver at the airport. In an interview with her, she recalled the day as follows:

The first day I landed in the US, my feeling towards English changed immediately after we took a taxi from the airport to East Lansing. I knew some English before I came to the US but I could not understand even a little bit of what the taxi driver was saying. Thank god, my husband was with me and he communicated with the taxi driver. What would I have done if he was not with me. What would I do with my two kids? ... hmm... I would have shown the taxi driver my address written on a piece of a paper and would say a couple words. Oh my God. I still feel scared when I remember that day.

All the above data extracts show that their initial motivation and anticipation were completely different after their arrival in the US. Whereas Shakuntala's motivation is linked to her work though she does not remember being very anxious on the very first day, both the other participants Bhoomika and Ranjeeta share how their anxiety level raised even at the airport on the very first day in the US.

### **English, an Empowering Tool**

From the rigorous analysis of the data collected from the three participants, I came up with this subtitle "English as an empowering tool". At one or other occasion, each participant expressed to me that English is a tool to empower themselves. In this section, I have only presented the data excerpts that were recorded during my interview with them. However, on several other informal occasions and gatherings in the Nepali community too, they expressed how they feel empowered when they could communicate in English. Since I did not want to make them feel as if I was approaching them as a researcher every time, I did not keep notes of every occasion at which we met. In the following excerpt from her diary, Shakuntala wrote:

English is our powerful weapon to survive in this world, especially in the English speaking countries ... I am still not very fluent in English but far more confident to speak whatever I know... Today, I made the person at the bakery write the line that I wanted on a cake I was buying. First, he did not understand me because I was asking him to write something which perhaps he might not have written before. It was “Happy Teej to all the Nepali women”. I described to the guy what Teej festival is. He was quite excited to know about it. He liked everything about it except that women fast without drinking a single drop of water. He said, “You are great”. .. I think he understood what I had said. In many situations, I wish I knew more and more English... but today I did well. Whenever I can communicate with other people whose first language is not English and with native speakers of English, I feel less stressed... I feel empowered. Even my female self makes me realize that I am not weak from any angle.

The above diary entry by Shakuntala indicates how accomplished she felt after being able to make the worker at the bakery understand what she wanted him to write on the cake she bought. This indicates the execution of different capitals and resources by the participants during interaction in order to reshape and reconstruct their identity. Her uses of the words like “empowered” and “not weak” exhibit her perception towards the role of English as a powerful tool in her identity reshaping. Similarly, Bhoomika credited the English language in the restructuring of her identity and admits that English is helping her empower herself. She associated her ability to communicate in English with her confidence, which in turn led her to be more empowered. She said, “The more I learn English, the more I can communicate with people ... I feel more confident... The more confident I become, the more powerful I feel of myself. I feel as if I am empowered.” Likewise, Ranjeeta recalled some examples of how she was able to make people understand her using English day by day. In one of her diary entries, she wrote, “I had done online shopping some days ago... arrived today... but I called them and complained to them because the thing was not as good as I had expected and as it was described on their website... though I had to struggle to understand what they said ... I did not give up. I felt like a hard rock [laughs]... strong and powerful when I could speak English.” From all the above

excerpts from interviews and the diary entries, we can see that the success in communicating in English is linked by all the participants to the increase in their confidence and they feel empowered and stronger in regard to their identity of self.

### **Lack of English Attributed to being a Woman**

Also observed in the data was the participants' view that their lack of English is to some extent attributable to their being women. Though they felt empowered using English and frequently mentioned their changing self; they still believed that sometimes they had felt that they might have been more successful using English if they had been men. Ranjeeta in an interview said:

In the beginning, I had to ask people to repeat many times... I felt that they were irritated with me... I also thought that their irritation was due to my gender ... I had always looked at myself from the point of view of limitations... Whenever, I failed to communicate in English, I immediately linked the failure with me being a woman... slowly I realized that there was not any problem in understanding due to my gender ... it was because of my lack of proficiency in English...

This excerpt indicates that although Ranjeeta no longer links her lack of proficiency in English to her female gender, she used to perceive that in her beginning days in the US. She also said it took her a long time to cultivate the belief that her gender does not have anything to do with the incomprehensibility between her and her interlocutors. On the other hand, Shakuntala still thought that because she was a woman, her opportunities to interact in English were fewer compared to men. The following excerpt of an interview with her shows her feelings:

S: Women have less friends compared to men. So, there are less chances to communicate in English. My friend circle is limited to the family where I work ... my classmates in the community college ... and a few other international students who I meet during summer and fall while doing gardening in the community center. If I were a man, I would have more chances to go out ... more friends ... more talking in English ... more confidence ... [smiles]



H: but you said that you are free to go anywhere and do anything?

S: Yes, but still I can't go out without any reason, I can't attend all the programs hosted by different organizations ... there are so many programs hosted by women welfare, family welfare, student organizations, English conversation classes ... and so on.

H: why can't you attend them?

S: I go only when I have to go... otherwise I avoid going to many programs. My identity as a mother and a wife does not let me go out all the time ... want to spend time with and for my family.

This interesting excerpt indicates that despite having more freedom in the US, Shakuntala thought that her chances to communicate in English were limited due to her gender. Her perception was that there was not the lack of opportunities, but her choice to spend more time at home during her free time was bound by her identity as a mother and a wife. In a similar vein, Bhoomika thought that freedom did not mean that she could do anything. She wanted to preserve her culture by making a boundary of what she should do in spite of having more freedom. In an interview with her, she narrated a story. The segment that supports this theme is presented below:

Can you believe what happened last year? ... My daughter had just started speaking. She used to watch cartoons a lot. When she started speaking, we could not understand what she said. It neither sounded like Nepali nor like English... I was so worried. Then, we wanted to hire a nurse who could visit our home at least once a week to see how our daughter was progressing. She was just two years old. Since my husband would be in his office the whole day, I did not want any male come to see my daughter in my husband's absence. Finally, we found a nice lady, who visited our house... talked to our two years old daughter... after a couple of visits, she told us that there was no problem with our daughter... she said that the problem lied in us [laughs] because we could not understand her... since she watched cartoons a lot, her voice was like the cartoon characters... her English was like the native English speaking children...

This excerpt shows that Bhoomika was worried about her daughter's early utterances and had thought that there was some problem with her daughter. When I asked her why she waited until she found a female nurse, she said, "I have more freedom here but I can't cross my limits. I

know my cultural boundaries very well. I want to improve my English but I can't forget that I am a woman and I know who I should make friends with... and who I should spend more time communicating in English". Bhoomika's feeling that she could not meet any man in her husband's absence is in line with Shakuntala's feeling that there are certainly fewer interactional opportunities for women even if it is their choice not to attend programs and communicate with more people.

From all the above discussion related to the first research question [i.e., How is the gendered identity of the Nepalese women being reshaped after their migration to the US and how does it affect their access to English?] so far, it seems that the participants' initial self of their female identity to some extent has widened in both temporal and spatial dimensions. They associate the reformulations of their identity with their mental freedom in relation to many aspects ranging from their choices to wear comfortable clothes to driving to work. However, they still hold the belief that they should not misuse their freedom and should not forget their original cultural boundaries. Above all, they view that English has played an important role in the reshaping of their self and identity.

## **Investment**

Research Question 2: What are their investments in learning conversational skills in English and what impact do these investments have in their overall process of learning English?

As mentioned, the concept of investment goes beyond the concept of motivation and accounts for all the dynamic and complex interactive processes going on between learners and their surroundings. In the previous section of gendered identity, we saw that all three participants felt bad in the beginning days in the US due to their lack of proficiency in English. Within the first couple of weeks, they did not start working and stayed at home. Each of the participants

shared her experience of being invited to dinners and gatherings for some days almost regularly by the members of the Nepali community immediately after their arrival in the US. They even forgot that they had travelled more than 8,000 miles away from their home. However, after every family had invited them to their homes, the gathering in the Nepali community became less frequent. Ranjeeta's eldest son and Shakuntala's son and daughter started going to school. On the other hand, Bhoomika did not have a child at that time. After about a month of their arrival, life became harder to stay at home. Whereas Shakuntala's and Bhoomika's husbands wanted them to go out to join the free English classes offered by the community in which they were staying, Ranjeeta's husband used to tell her that it would take her some time to adjust in the new environment. He used to share with her his own experience when he first came to the US. However, he told her that he would soon send her to a community college for English classes. In the previous section, we noticed that each participant was initially instrumentally motivated to learn the English language in Nepal, i.e., to pass the exams. After their arrival in the US, all three participants started looking for opportunities to learn English and interact with either native speakers of English or other ESL learners. Shakuntala and Bhoomika wanted to improve their English because both of them wanted to work in the US, whereas Ranjeeta's main aim was to be able to interact with her son's teachers at his school so that she could save her image as a caring mother in front of her son. She said, "My son always took me as his role model in Nepal because I always attended the parent teacher meetings in school, helped him with the extra-curricular activities ... I did not want my son to feel bad just because of my bad English ... I had to save my face." This face saving motive prompted Ranjeeta to invest her time, effort, and energy in learning English. However, the greatest problem was that she could not find a "perfect place" where her English would be improved.

Before I move onto the data analysis and discuss the results related to the second research question related to the participants' investment in learning English, I would like to reiterate the discussion made in our previous section of gendered identity. All the participants shared the experience of having more freedom in the US and feeling empowered. However, they could not take advantage of all the existing opportunities to learn English because of their female identity, which required them to spend time with their children and husband rather than attending all the English speaking classes and interaction opportunities offered by different sources. What follows next is the discussion of the participants' investment in learning English through different modes and resources; different types of communication strategies they employed to increase their investment and participation and the impact of their investment on learning English, especially their English conversational skills.

Before I discuss all these subthemes under investment, I would like to mention the silent period the participants went through. In the second language acquisition literature, it is said that silent period is a noticeable phenomenon (Ellis, 1985) and second language learners in the very beginning of their language learning process pass through a silent period although the length of the silent period varies from learner to learner. However, in this study, all three participants were not in the beginning phase of second language learning. Each of them had some prior knowledge of English and they had learned English in a formal setting in Nepal as they all had at least a high school degree before their arrival in the US. In Nepal, English is taught as a compulsory course throughout school starting from the primary level to the higher secondary level. Despite having some knowledge of English, they preferred to be silent on several occasions in the beginning. All of them recalled their earlier days in the US and stated that they felt blank even if they knew some English. Bhoomika said, "Sometimes I thought that it was better to be quiet and listen than

to say something that people would not understand due to my Nepali accent.” Similarly, Shakuntala said, “I would just listen to people talk in the gatherings and would smile along with them but would not speak until they asked me some questions.” In a similar vein, Ranjeeta stated, “I used to try my best to avoid the situations where I had to talk... it was only in the beginning... maybe for some months...I did not want to be comic in front of people... maybe it was my fear only... people were always nice to me.” The participants’ resistance to participate in interactions in the beginning of their arrival in the US is similar to the silent period phenomenon, when they might have wanted to develop some confidence before they could communicate freely. Their fear of being humiliated stopped them from participating in interactions in the native English speaker settings.

### **Investment in Learning English**

The participants’ investment in learning English in the data collected could be traced to different sources. Each story they told me, every experience they went through directly or indirectly informed me that they were committed and dedicated to learn and improve their English. Two of the participants, Bhoomika and Shakuntala, had experienced free English classes at the community center. Shakuntala even showed me the flyer she had in her file for the last four years. She had a very organized collection of many flyers, brochures, and leaflets related to free English classes, insurance and health plans, free family counseling sessions, and so on. The flyer that was related to the free English classes at the community center read as:

Perfect my English  
Bring your lunch or just yourself and engage in fruitful conversation with a native-speaker. We look forward to meeting you.

This sentence was followed by a picture in which two heads were shown (a native speaker and a non-native speaker) and the knowledge was flowing from the native head to the non-native head. Shakuntala told me that she had an emotional attachment to that flyer since it offered her the first free English sessions. Her response illustrated how invested she was in improving her English. However, she was not satisfied with the service provided. The following excerpt from an interview with Shakuntala indicated her dissatisfaction:

S: I was so happy to join the free English conversation classes... I thought that was the time when my English would be polished. I would learn more words, more rules... improve my pronunciation ... I don't want to say that those classes did not help me at all, but they were just too informal ... unstructured.

H: what do you mean by unstructured?

S: I mean it was just like meeting one person or two and talk on some random topics for half an hour or more... I could make good friends with the tutor and a couple other ESL learners but they did not tell me directly ... how to initiate a talk ... how to reply to different types of questions ... how to say yes/no to the invitations, how to offer help like ... you know? I respected the way they were providing free help ... it just did not help me to improve my English ... may be I had too high expectation ... may be that would help me in the long run ... I don't know ... I was so desperate that I wanted to start working as soon as possible as it was difficult for four of us to live only on my husband's stipend.

In this excerpt, Shakuntala expressed her expectation of her English classes. Her desire to learn English explicitly might have come from her way of learning English in Nepal where the vocabulary items and grammatical rules are provided to the learners and they are told when to use them. All the examples she has provided in the excerpt indicate that she wanted to learn was the communicative functions in English and take part in the real life discourse. At the same time, her desire to learn English in a speedy way and then start working immediately shows that part of her investment was still instrumental in nature. Her feeling at that time was more guided by her emotions to support her husband financially and to look after her two children. Similarly, Bhoomika had gone to attend the informal ESL classes offered by Friendship House, run by a

Church, to improve her English. She remembered her first day there and said, “I was so nervous to enter the building ... I had thought that the people there would think that I was not smart ... I felt relaxed when I was warmly welcomed by the members there ... the behaviors were in line with the name of the organization...Friendship House... more importantly, there were so many other ESL learners like me.” She enjoyed the informal conversations at the Friendship house. She also said that she would notice how other people start conversations. She made many American and international friends, many of whom are still in touch with her through Facebook and email. While Shakuntala did not benefit much from the informal conversational classes, Bhoomika found them helpful. On the other end of the spectrum lies the third participant, Ranjeeta who did not even bother to attend such informal classes because according to her, she had to look after her daughter. When I told her that some of those types of classes also managed a childcare facility, she replied, “Maybe but I did not care ... I was so lazy [smiles]. Instead I knitted the sweaters, scarves for my children and husband ... and better excuse than that is ... there was a Bhutanese woman nearby who spoke Nepali ... I hang out with her ... I know I should have taken initiatives to look for such free classes ... but now I have even my third child to look after”.

Bhoomika and Shakuntala had joined the ESL classes at Lansing Community College in the fall of 2014, whereas Ranjeeta joined in the fall of 2015 only. Their investment in those classes is guided by similar purposes. They have all been learning English for both instrumental and integrative purposes. As noted by Shakuntala, “The unstructured informal classed did not help me much ... more importantly, I want to go for my nursing degree in future so that I could be a certified nurse in the US ... I need to pass certain level in the ESL classes ... also I want to be more fluent so that I could be a part of American society because we are going to live here

forever ... so, we can't always compromise with our lack of English." Similarly, Bhoomika joined the ESL classes with the motivation of getting admitted to an undergraduate program in an American university and also wants to "feel like English speakers." Although Ranjeeta's experience has been different from Bhoomika's and Shakuntala's, she also has both instrumental and integrative motivation for joining ESL classes. She said, "I will enroll in an undergraduate program after I complete all five levels at the community college ... now that we are living in the US for at least until our children graduate, I want to be a part of American culture ... who knows? My children may have American spouse in future [laughs]." Regarding the continuation of their formal study, Bhoomika and Ranjeeta are not quite sure in which discipline they will major, whereas Shakuntala knows for sure that she will pursue nursing since she was working as a nurse in Nepal.

### **Investment through Television, YouTube Videos, and Human Interactions**

In addition to the participants' investment in attending English classes either in an informal, unstructured setting or in the formal community college setting, the data also demonstrated their self-initiated investment in learning through several other sources such as YouTube videos on learning English, free English learning websites, television, email, and Facebook. Bhoomika seems to be relatively more invested in improving her communicative English. An interesting excerpt from one of her diary entries is as follows:

Today I searched for some YouTube videos to learn and improve my English ... there were so many of them ... I did not have an idea of what to watch ... I chose the ones that were related to pronunciation ... First, the speaker produced single words and then he put them into sentences ... he was showing that same word can be produced differently when it comes in a sentence ... I was surprised and then realized that's why it is difficult to understand American speakers ... they speak so fast and the words also change their color in sentences ... the speaker in the video was producing parts of



sentences and then he would stop for some seconds for the listeners to repeat after him ... I liked it and at the end, I subscribed to their channel to watch more videos.

I was always amazed by Bhoomika's enthusiasm during the data collection process. Every time I met her, she would have a list of questions related to English. Her questions were either related to grammar rules or the meaning of vocabulary items. She would then write down the answers. One day after the interview, she asked me to stay a little longer with her and help her with the tense system in English. I helped her but just an hour was not sufficient to show her how the tense system works. She was not completely ignorant of the tense system but wanted to learn more about it. She came to my apartment a couple of times to continue our discussion on tense. Every time she would come with the same notebook so that she would not miss her notes. She would ask me to give her some sentences for practice and in turn I would ask her to which tense a particular sentence belonged. She was always full of questions. In an interview, she also stated that she looked for some free websites that teach English. However, she could not benefit much from them because she said, "First, they showed some short clips which looked very helpful ... later they asked for money [smiles] ... maybe I am not very good at searching for free websites." Bhoomika frequently referred to the YouTube videos in her diary entries and interviews. She was not only motivated but also invested in improving her English.

On the other hand, according to Ranjeeta, watching TV is a good way to learn English. She mentioned that she could not understand anything while watching English channels and movies, but slowly she learned to understand. She stated, "It took me long time to be able to understand ... maybe one year ... now I watch and listen to English news ... I am worried about what is happening in the world ... I keep on changing channels ... I don't feel left behind anymore." When I further enquired what she meant by "left behind", she said that her son and

her husband would understand the news and programs in English, and then would comment on them but she had to ask them what the news was about. However, the situation has totally changed now. She said, “I did not stop watching TV even if I did not understand ... I had no option ... I could not watch Nepali, Hindi channels on TV ... but everything happens for good ... since I had no other options, I kept on watching English programs.” However, it is not only Ranjeeta who thinks that TV is helpful; Shakuntala also thinks that TV has helped her develop her level of understanding native speakers of English. All the three participants admit that watching TV helps them improve their receptive skill, especially listening, but none of them believes that it has a great impact on their productive skills, that is, speaking.

Regarding the participants’ access to native speakers of English and other ESL speakers, the participants have different views. Whereas Shakuntala thinks that it is easy to interact with other ESL speakers because they also encounter the same feelings and struggles. The following excerpt shows her feeling towards her perceptions of ESL learners:

I rent a small garden at the community center every summer and fall ... I grow a lot of vegetables there ... when I go to water the saplings, I meet many other ESL speakers there ... we observe each other’s garden and give advice, if necessary ... we share seeds of green leafy vegetables with each other ... I feel comfortable talking with them ... I always look forward to seeing them in the morning and in the evening so that I could talk to them in English ... a Chinese told me that my English was easy to understand ... he could speak only some words in English ... I feel more secured to talk to them as they are also not perfect ... they are not judgmental.

This excerpt shows that Shakuntala’s insecurity lies in her feelings that the native speakers would judge her lack of proficiency in English. Due to that fear, she prefers to invest her time and effort to interact with other ESL learners. On the other end of the spectrum lies Bhoomika whose view is totally different regarding her perception towards communication with native English speakers and other ESL speakers. She thinks that it is worth spending time with

native speakers because in her opinion, they are the ultimate source of reference. The following excerpt shows her view about investing in learning English from native speakers:

I think it is more helpful for me to communicate with native English speakers than with other ESL speakers. The ESL speakers initiate the conversation abruptly ... and they directly dive into the topic of what they have to say ... otherwise there is just “hi” and “hello” stuff with them... whereas with the native speakers, it is so easy ... they begin by saying “I liked the color you are wearing; wow what an adorable child,” like things which make me feel more comfortable to discuss the topic ... they do not directly touch the topic ... they do not stop the conversation abruptly ... I have picked up so many expressions from native speakers which I try to use to start and end the conversations.

This excerpt indicates that one of Bhoomika’s many assets is her willingness to communicate with native speakers of English. Her perception is that native speakers make her feel more comfortable by “setting scene” to foster interaction. This idea is related to the listener-initiated strategies proposed by Kirkpatrick (2010).

Whereas Shakuntala prefers to invest more time interacting with other ESL speakers, Bhoomika prefers with native speakers of English. In the middle of the spectrum was Ranjeeta, who indicated no preference with whom she communicated. In her opinion, what matters the most is that learners get sufficient opportunities to interact. She thinks that the people in the US are so indifferent to each other. She also stated that it is difficult to know the neighbors very well, which she compared to the situation in Nepal where neighbors are like relatives with whom she could share her feelings and experiences. In the following excerpt, she expressed her feeling that people are too busy with their own business:

In Nepal, there is a saying ... *jiuda ko janti, mardako malami* [a friend in need is a friend in deed] ... I feel like there is a lack of human relations ... emotions ... people are too busy ... so, I don’t give importance to who I am talking to as long as I am talking to someone in English ... all I want is to talk to humans ... I have more ESL

friends through ESL classes at the community college ... I also talk to native speakers ... like for example, our ESL teacher, some American friends who I met at my children's schools... I used to be more comfortable interacting with ESL speakers than with native English speakers ... in course of time ... I felt more comfortable communicating with native speakers ... both groups have impacted my English learning [smiles].

The literal translation of the proverb that Ranjeeta has used in the above excerpt reads as “together: in marriage when alive and in cremation when dead” which indicates that neighbors are friends and are always together with you through thick and thin. However, she feels that there is no such thing as a close bond among people in the US due to their busy lifestyle. In her opinion, finding opportunities to interact in English in itself is a great investment to help oneself improve her everyday use of English. In sum, all three participants have different perceptions and experiences about their investment in learning English through interaction with other people.

### **Facebook: A Valuable Learning Tool**

One of the recurring themes in the data collected through interviews was the participants' use of Facebook as a learning tool. In the beginning, each of them had said that they used Facebook to share their pictures so that their friends, families, and relatives in Nepal could see them. They also reported that they felt good when their friends liked their pictures, commented on them, and even shared their posts. However, all of them seemed perplexed when I asked them if they could use it as a learning tool. My participants and I agreed to have a group chat through messaging in inbox since they were not comfortable with creating a private Facebook page. However, I could not collect much data from this platform because each of the participants had a different schedule to go to work and it was difficult for them to sit and give comments at the same time, that is, synchronously. All of them, however, were more willing to jot down the incidents in their diaries. They sometimes used the Facebook chat group to ask me some

questions related to grammar and vocabulary. Bhoomika said, “First, I try to check the online dictionary to find the meaning of words ... but it is like one way ... you can’t ask it which meaning among many fits in the situation I want to use ...if I ask you, you tell me which meaning is more appropriate because I can give you context and ... we can have further discussion ... So, it’s easy.” Shakuntala and Bhoomika initiated more conversations on Facebook group chat than Ranjeeta. When asked why she did not do it more frequently, Ranjeeta told me that she felt that it was easy to continue a discussion once someone began it. Shakuntala once initiated a conversation with Bhoomika and wrote:

S: English is easy and difficult at the same time. What do you say sisters?

B: like for example?

S: there is only one form “you” to talk to [address] all ... so many forms in Nepal creates ego problems .. ha ha

B: difficulty then?

S: everytime I translate the words from Nepali to English, I mess up... today I wanted to give a ride to a friend and I said, “I can leave you.” He was confused because the context was that I was offering him help but the meaning was different. Ha ha

B: haha I have had the same feeling many times. When I heard someone saying “I can drop you”, I could accept the offer but why do we not just learn from what we hear? We go back to our original language and translate...

S: what can we do?... *aadat se majboor* [conditioned] haha

The above excerpt from the group chat between Bhoomika and Shakuntala indicates that they were aware of their language use. Shakuntala’s realization of the use of the second person pronoun “you” to address everyone is an indication that she felt it easier compared to the Nepali second person pronoun which is realized in five different forms, in terms of honorifics. Similarly, the expression “I will leave you” is the literal translation of the Nepali expression “*Ma chodi diula*”, which means “I can give you a ride/ I can drop you.” Bhoomika also shares in the above excerpt that she had had similar problems due to direct translation. The italicized

expression in the last line in the above excerpt “*aadat se majboor*” is a famous Hindi expression that even people in Nepal use to express the meaning that we are so conditioned to do something. Ranjeeta was privy to the whole online chat but did not respond. When asked in the interview after some days, she said that she did not have similar experiences. She admitted that translation from Nepali into English had certainly created some confusion between her and her interlocutors but she did not remember specific examples at that very moment. The participants’ investment in having an interactive chat is still ongoing, thereby illustrating their continued investment in learning English.

### **Learning from Family Members**

Another illustration of Ranjeeta and Shakuntala’s investment is that they have the benefit of having high school children from whom they can receive assistance in some cases. Shakuntala said, “When I am reading for my ESL classes and doing homework, instead of checking the online dictionary, I turn around to my children ... I ask them ... they help me many times... I don’t feel small when I take help from my children.” Similarly, Ranjeeta’s eldest son has helped her many times with her homework and to overcome her confusion. He even helps her when her pronunciation is inaccurate. He does so, however, in a nice manner, according to her. She said, “My son always corrects my pronunciation of certain words.” On the other hand, Bhoomika’s daughter is very young to help her. However, she recalls the same story when she had to take help from a nurse to figure out the problem when she and her husband could not understand their daughter’s first utterances. She smiled and said, “My daughter was born in the US... she will have a perfect American accent ... she can’t help me now but maybe in future ....” This statement shows that Bhoomika’s investment in learning English is also associated with her future dream where she sees her daughter helping her improve her English.

## **Investment and Participation: Enacting Communication Strategies**

One of the common themes that recurred in the stories my participants shared was their use of different communication strategies to make themselves understood on different occasions. Some strategies that I observed in the data are repetition, elaboration, and explanation, which will be addressed in the following discussion. Although the participants went through a silent period in the beginning despite knowing some English, over time all of them invested in communication through different modes. The interview data show that they had all co-constructed their participation and investment on different occasions. Shakuntala recalled an incident when she went to her Chinese neighbor to give him some fresh vegetables that she had grown in her garden. The excerpt below shows how she made him understand that she was not selling the vegetables to him:

I took some leafy vegetables, some pieces of pumpkin, a couple of cucumbers... went to the neighbor next door ... I had talked to his wife a couple times ... knocked at his door because you know in Nepal, we always share the fruits and vegetables that we grow in our field ... he opened the door [laughs]... and I said to him, "I have brought some fresh vegetables from my garden" He said, "no no we don't want to buy them" [laughs] I again said, "no no not selling ... just giving ..." the man looked at me as if I was going to ask him for something in return... I continued ... I have a garden and there are lots of vegetables ... this is fresh... no pesticides... [laughs] but he was too adamant to accept them ... [laughs] only after sometime he took the vegetables ... bowed down his head and thanked me. I had to repeat the same sentences so many times ... I was worried if he would bring something to me in return which I did not want him to do ... [laughs]

This excerpt indicates that Shakuntala was highly invested in making her neighbors understand that she was just sharing the vegetables she had grown and they were a gift. She could have left after her first and second attempts but she kept on explaining to the man the reason she had brought the vegetables to him. To further explain this issue with me, Shakuntala said, "You know it maybe because of cultural difference ... when I give YOU something from

my garden you just thank me and I don't have to explain because we are from the same culture.” She had offered me vegetables and tasty dishes every time I went to her home. Her use of the stress on the word ‘you’ shows that she was explaining to me the difference between her and her neighbor’s culture. Her use of *repetition* and *elaboration* led her to succeed in communication, to make the neighbor understand her. The more interesting aspect is that following that incident, Shakuntala did not have to explain the gift giving gesture to the man ever again. He or his wife would take the vegetables and thank her.

In a similar vein, Bhoomika made use of *explanation* to make her co-workers understand that she could not work in the section where she had to deal with beef. She used to work at McDonald’s. She did not even want to touch beef for religious reasons but she was assigned to work in the particular section. On the first day, she was shown how to work and how to prepare burgers. One of the co-workers who had worked there for quite a long time showed her everything and explained to her but the moment she reached the place where beef was kept open, she came to know that she had to touch it and make different things with it. She said that she felt like crying. She did not say anything to them because she did not have to do anything with beef on that particular day but the following day she was supposed to touch it. In the excerpt below, she described how she could negotiate with and convince her employer and other co-workers:

I approached the beef ... I felt uncomfortable ... maybe my psychology only ... when I touched it strange thing happened ... I felt like scratching my palms. The following day, I had some rashes in my hand and wrist area ... I showed them to the employer and told him that I was allergic to beef ... I was afraid that I would be fired ... but amazing ... he told me to work at the section where there was no beef after I got better of my rashes ... and my co-workers also took it positively.

This excerpt shows how Bhoomika achieved what she wanted to convey. She explained to them that she was allergic to beef despite her fear that she might be fired from her job if she



said so. She explained that she told him politely and got the similar responses. He could have gotten mad at her for not telling him the fact that she could not touch beef but he did not respond negatively. After several days, one of her co-workers asked her if it was due to religious reasons and Bhoomika explained to her that originally it was due to her religious beliefs. She said, “If I had told her that Hindus do not eat cow’s meat; she would have felt bad for being biased. I told her that maybe our blood and genes do not have that capacity to digest beef because none of our family members and ancestors had ever eaten that...” Bhoomika’s explanation here is an indication of her ability to contextualize and elaborate. She could have told her co-worker about the religious reasons only. However, in a very skillful way, she associated the explanation with her body not having that stamina to digest beef. She told me that she had felt very happy when she could make her co-worker understand why she was allergic to beef.

Bhoomika’s strategy to communicate with her co-worker in a convincing manner is also an example of how much she is invested in adjusting to the surroundings. In a similar vein, Ranjeeta’s investment in improving her English is connected with her being able to communicate with the parents of her children’s classmates and friends. She said that since her son and daughter attended high school and pre-school respectively, she had different sorts of motivation to interact with them. In the excerpt from an interview below, she noted:

With the parents of my daughter’s friends, I would feel more comfortable since I had a lot to talk to them, for example, her playing behaviors, what she likes to eat and do, her mischievous behaviors and so on. However, with the parents of my son’s friends, I would not feel that comfortable since they would talk about the project works their children were involved in, their extra-curricular activities, their colleges for future, the disciplines they were interested in and so on. I felt so dumb ... but I also wanted to share with them that my son has been good in his study and even in his extra-curricular participation ... then, I started asking my son more about what he is doing at school, his aim for future, his strengths ... and everything... my son wants to join the police force ... serve the people ... after talking to him so many times I came to know about his passion for joining the police ... next time I met the parents of my son’s friends at

school functions and parent teacher meetings, I proudly told them about my son... they appreciated it... I was so touched.

The above excerpt from my interview with Ranjeeta can be analyzed and interpreted from different angles. First, she was so motivated and invested in her son's study and future plans. The motive behind that was her willingness to participate in the parent teacher meetings. She wanted to be an insider in the group rather than a mere listener. Her expression "I felt so dumb" indicates how she was prompted to learn more about the subject matter and academic community of practice so that she could no longer find herself dumb. Second, her investment is also associated with her awareness of two different target groups (parents of high school students and parents of pre-school students). On the one hand, her confidence level is high enough to interact with the parents of pre-school children because they would talk more about the children's playing, and eating behaviors. On the other hand, she has to invest some time and energy to learn about some aspects of her son's life and his age group so that she could be a part of the discussion group. Her investment here is not only to communicate in English but also to learn something first and then communicate that through English.

All the above excerpts and examples support the fact that the participants were motivated and dedicated to convey the message they wanted to share with others. Bhoomika's communication with her employer and co-worker; Shakuntala's communication with her Chinese neighbor; and Ranjeeta's communication with the parents of her high school and pre-school children led them to succeed in communication in those particular contexts.

In addition to all the above presented strategies that the participants had adopted and invested in improving their communicative skills in English, the following incident clarifies how one of the participants, Shakuntala, made use of the available technology and internet to make

her interlocutor understand her. The following excerpt from her diary entry indicates how she was not only motivated to communicate but also committed to convey what she wanted to:

It was a potluck day at the community center ... many international students and their families were present ... each family had brought at least a dish representing their country ... I had brought lentil soup with mixed types of beans ... a lady liked it and she asked me how I had made it ... I struggled a lot but tried my best to tell her how I had made it... I knew that it was hard to follow when you just describe... the lady was nodding her head as if she had learnt how to make it [smiles] ... I also wanted to tell her that I did not have a different type of lentil to add in it... she said, “but it tastes good, would it taste different if you added that?” I wanted to tell her the name but I did not know its English name... I wanted to show her the picture to see if she had ever seen it ... I did not have Internet on my mobile... I asked her if she had Internet on her mobile... she seemed excited and gave it to me... I googled its Nepali name “*gahar*” and found its English name [horse gram] and also showed her the picture... she said, “Oh, this? I have seen it but we don’t use it much... and then I told her that horse gram is very good for the treatment of kidney stone... she thanked me for sharing the information with her ... I felt so accomplished.

Shakuntala’s strategy and enthusiasm in conveying her message to her interlocutor in the above excerpt shows that she was not only putting forth her effort to convey the message but she did not want to give up even if she did not know the English name for the lentil. She was not ready to just leave the conversation in the middle and just tell her interlocutor that she could not find horse gram to add in the soup. She also wanted to share with her the health benefit of the gram. The expression “I felt so accomplished” exhibits her mental satisfaction for the result of her effort. After reading her diary entry, when I met her for the next interview after about a week, I asked her what she would do if that lady did not have Internet access on her phone. I was amazed by her response. She said that she would either find her husband at the gathering to ask for his mobile, which had Internet connection or would ask her children if they knew the English name for the lentil. She smiled and said, “I don’t know what I had thought that day... I just wanted to share the health benefit of that lentil to her... she seemed nice to me... she came to me to ask the recipe and was patiently listening to me when I was describing with my broken

English...[smiles] if she had not shown interest, I might not have struggled much.” This quote from the interview shows that investment is co-constructed. It is not just a learner who invests in trying to communicate, his/her interlocutor also plays a very important role in co-constructing the success of communication. This type of negotiation is “reified through ... mutual engagement” (Canagarajah, 2013, p. 30).

### **Observing my Participants Use English**

Despite all the above discussion on different strategies the participants have adopted in their investment in improving their English, I also noticed some amazing small incidents when I spent a day with each of the participants. All three participants shared two common experiences about grocery shopping and how it has helped them in learning some English and being confident to find things on their own at the grocery stores. First, each of them said that while looking for the items they wanted, especially vegetables and fruits, they had learned many English names, which they had never learned at schools in Nepal. Second, it is the shopkeeper who gives the customer everything she needs in Nepal. She did not have to find the items on her own. However, in the US, a customer has to search for everything on their own. Bhoomika, Shakuntala, and Ranjeeta said that it took them a couple of months to figure out which item can be found in which aisles. According to them, they encountered little opportunity to interact with people. When I went to a supermarket with Bhoomika, we chatted a lot and did some grocery shopping. I saw that she was picking up the vegetables and fruits very carefully and was also reading the names of vegetables in English. She told me that she had learned the names of a lot of vegetables by looking at their names on the display labels. She also reported that there were differences between the names that we had learned at schools in Nepal and the names used here in the US. She gave some examples: “lady’s finger” is called “okra”; “capsicum” is called “bell

pepper”; “coriander” is called “cilantro”. It took her some time to learn the American names for the vegetables and she said that she knew many of the names after grocery shopping on her own for a long time. After we were done shopping, I was pushing my cart towards the check-out line but she preferred to go to the self-check line. I followed her and told her that it would have been easier if we had chosen the other option. To my great surprise, she just said, “*jhyau lagchha malai tiniharu sanga bolna*” [I feel irritated to talk to them]. I was really confused when I heard this from my most enthusiastic participant who had always been so motivated and invested in improving her English. However, the more interesting thing happened at the self-check-out. I was waiting for her to finish but the machine got stuck and she could not proceed. We both tried but I could not help her either. Finally, she had to call for help and a worker came and helped solve the problem. When we were heading to her car, she said, “I wanted to avoid talking to them but I had to call one of them for help [laughs].” I asked her why she had tried to avoid talking to the worker, she said,

They ask so many questions and all the questions are always the same ... exactly the same... I feel like I am talking to a machine... I like the way they say “hi” and “have a nice one” though ... don’t think that I always do that but sometime I just want to avoid talking to them and do it on my own.

From this incident and from all the above examples and themes discussed above and in the previous section, which are related to Bhoomika, what we can infer is that even a highly motivated person may not be always invested. Her use of the Nepali expression in the above excerpt “*jhyau lagchha malai tiniharu sanga bolna*” shows that she did not think it was worth talking to the workers because of their use of fixed formulaic expressions. She said that they spoke like parrots. However, she acknowledged their patience to smile at and talk to hundreds of customers every day. Bhoomika resisted being exposed to the repeated use of formulaic

expressions used by the workers at the check-out. This incident shows that investment is not a static phenomenon. Instead, it is a complex process and keeps on changing on the basis of time, interlocutors, attitude and mood of the speaker and the listener, and several other components. It is also guided by the second language learners' expectation of specific results from a particular situation. For example, in this case, Bhoomika's perception of not hearing any new sentences from the workers stopped her from communicating with the workers at the supermarket.

### **Investment in Listening, Reading, and Writing**

Although my initial purpose was to investigate my participants' investment in learning speaking skills, especially for communicative purposes, I added in my interview guide the questions related to their investment in learning other skills: listening, reading, and writing. This was mainly done because of certain behaviors and responses they had shown during our meetings and interviews.

Regarding the development of their listening skill, all three of them at one time or another told me that listening to English news, and watching whatever program their family members were watching had helped them a lot. As a result, they had developed their comprehension skills and they can now understand native English speakers. Bhoomika told me that she liked the Oprah Winfrey show. She admired Oprah for her work and thought that she inspired a lot of women. She also told me that she had benefited a lot from watching the show and said, "When you watch your favorite show, you have two benefits ... you enjoy the program and also improve your language."

Regarding their reading skill, all three participants believe that reading the printed forms like books, and magazines was more helpful for them compared to online reading. Shakuntala once asked me if I had some books on American history since she had to find a book appropriate

to her level, read it, and answer the comprehension questions related to it. It was a part of her assignment. I had got a couple of books related to reading, and grammar from the English Language Center at my university last year when the books were being recycled. Fortunately, I could also pick up some of those books, which I had saved with me. When Shakuntala asked me for the books, I thought they would help her but she was looking for books with pictures and simple descriptions followed by some comprehension questions. She borrowed a couple books although they were not very helpful for her. She said that if she saw the hard copies of books on her table, she might pick them up to read some time.

On another occasion, Bhoomika reported to me that she had faced some difficulty due to an unclear email sent from the community center where she lived. She remembered that she and her husband received an email regarding some pest control issue in the apartment. The message in the email was that the pest control inspector would be inspecting all apartments. The inspection would take approximately 10 minutes and was actually a preventive measure to help ensure her apartment remained pest free. It asked the residents to remove everything from their closets and cupboards and keep them clean so that they could spray something to detect if there were any sorts of pests. She did it all alone since her husband had left early in the morning for his work. The inspector came in the afternoon and finished his work. She was advised not to put the things back for the next couple of hours. Several months later, she got another similar email. After her husband left for his work, on the inspection day, she removed everything as she had done the previous time. The inspector came and this time there was a different person. When he saw that she had removed everything from the cupboards and closets and kept all the things in one corner of the room, he told her that she did not have to do that. He could spray the thing just a little bit to see if there were any pests and the things did not have to be removed. The following

excerpt shows how she felt at that moment and how that very moment made her develop a habit of being more careful with the emails she received:

I told him that I had done the same thing last time too ... he said, “No mam, you did not have to do that”... so sorry for the inconvenience.” ... I was not happy... I had spent so much time in removing all the stuff and cleaning the closets and cupboards ... and it would again take me the same amount of time or even more to put them back... after the gentleman left, I read the email again... actually this time, there was no information about removing the items... it was MY fault ... *dukkha pais mangale afnai dhangale* [suffer for you own carelessness] [laughs]. From that day onwards, I read every important email very carefully and even make notes of things to be done and the deadlines, etc.

The above excerpt shows that one incident made Bhoomika more aware of what she was supposed to do with the important emails. She had already anticipated that she had to remove the items from the closets. She had done this on the basis of the previous email and inspection process. This time only after reading the title and main information, she just marked her calendar with the date and time for the inspection. She did not even bother to read the entire message in the body of the email. She could have just forgotten this incident and moved ahead, but the time she had spent on removing things and putting them back made her realize that not spending one minute in reading the email carefully made her waste much more time. This, in turn, prompted her to become more careful in reading every email after that. This shows that an investment in learning any aspect of communication or comprehension can also be triggered by the unpleasant consequences of a particular incident.

Regarding their writing skill, Bhoomika once told me that she wanted to make a vocabulary log book to write the difficult words she encountered in reading and the frequent words she heard in everyday conversations, and write their meanings. She heartily welcomed my



advice to not only make a list of words but also to make sentences using them and more importantly to try to use them in her real language use.

I would like to close this section with an interesting quote from my interview with Bhoomika when she said a monologue from a Bollywood movie, “I want to talk in English, walk in English, laugh in English [laughs].” All three participants were motivated to improve their English and be insiders in the English-speaking communities. However, all of them believed that the Nepali language was their real identity and they wanted to save it through their children. Both of Shakuntala’s children had been born in Nepal and had acquired Nepali before they came to the US. They only spoke Nepali at home. Ranjeeta’s eldest son was born in Nepal and was at his middle school when they came to the US and therefore, he spoke Nepali at home. Her second child, her daughter was born in Nepal and was three years old when they came to the US. She had acquired Nepali to some extent and because they all spoke only Nepali at home, she did not have a problem maintaining the language. However, she was worried about her youngest daughter who was born in the US. She said, “My eldest son is very helpful... he helps me with household work ... looks after his sisters... teaches them Nepali... he is my helping hand.” On the other hand, Bhoomika and her husband wanted their daughter to speak in Nepali. They used Nepali at home all the time but since the child spent most of her time watching English cartoons, she had acquired English. They were happy with the fact that her English would undoubtedly be native-like. However, they were worried if they would be able to make her speak Nepali fluently though she spoke some words and short sentences in Nepali. Bhoomika said, “She does not sound like a Nepali even when she speaks Nepali... we skype with my parents and parents-in-law ... they have only seen her on skype ... they want to talk to her... but she is always so busy

in watching cartoons that she rarely talks to them... when she talks they do not understand... it really hurts.”

In sum, while the participants were worried about improving their own English, they were also concerned about their children’s future to preserve their heritage language as this is their original identity. They thought that preserving language is a way of preserving history and culture. The quote from Bhoomika’s interview clarifies this, “...once a Nepali, always a Nepali.” This expression illustrates her deep emotional affinity to the heritage language and identity.

### **Translingual Practices**

Research Question 3: What translingual practices are these women involved in and how are these practices related to their learning of English for daily communication?

The data collected from different sources: interview, observation, and diary entries show some instances of translingual practices adopted by the three participants. The notion of translingual practices in itself is open to interpretation from different perspectives. Most of the translingual practice studies take into account the natural interactions taking place between interlocutors and study the collected data from conversational analysis, pragmatic analysis, and other frameworks. However, since I did not record the naturally occurring conversations between my participants and other ESL learners or native speakers, my analysis of the translingual practices of my participants is mainly based on what I elicited from them during interview sessions. Their diary entries about their experiences of particular incidents related to their use of English also provided me with some translingual practices they adopted. Likewise, there were several instances during my “A day in the life of X” observations that I found the participants making use of different types of negotiation strategies among other non-native speakers of English. I had made the field notes of those incidents. To make the data analysis related to

translingual practices easier, I used one of four translingual negotiation strategies presented by Canagarajah (2013). Among the four strategies he has mentioned: envoicing, recontextualization, interactional, and extextualization, I have used “interactional” strategy to see how the participants made use of different reciprocal and collaborative strategies in different contexts for the sake of intelligibility and communicative success (Canagarajah, 2013).

Second language learners bring with them different linguistic and cultural resources. When they engage in an interaction with other non-native speakers, they try their best to negotiate so that their interlocutors understand them. Generally, a native speaker model of a language is regarded as the norm of accuracy and appropriateness of language use. However, the study of translingual practices goes beyond that norm of correctness and digs deep into how the second language learners make use of their multiple resources to communicate in the target language.

### **Interactional Translingual Negotiation Strategies: Bridging the Gap**

In her diary entry, Bhoomika described how she achieved communicative success through negotiation with another non-native speaker of English. That woman was from Malawi, and Bhoomika had invited her to her apartment for dinner. In the following excerpt, Bhoomika recalls what happened after dinner:

She used to live next door ... was a new international student ... she liked the Nepali dinner I had prepared... she had also brought something typical of Malawi with her ... after the dinner, she said that she would come back again whenever her food was finished ... I was confused... what did she mean by her food was finished?... I asked her if she did not have food at her apartment and offered her to go for grocery with us on Fridays... she smiled and said, “No, no I have food now, I will come here and request you to make extra food for me too because you cook very good... I understood that she liked my food but still did not understand about her finished food... I continued ... you have food now but when you finish that you can go with us for grocery ok?... she replied, “Thank you, but if there is no food before Friday... I will

come here ... then I understood that maybe she was talking about the situation when she runs out of food... I also did not know the expression “run out of food” at that time... but I understood her and she understood me... both of us were not English people...so it took both of us to understand the situation.

In this excerpt from Bhoomika’s diary, the translingual practice of negotiation is achieved through both parties’ strategies. On the one hand, Bhoomika told her that she could give a ride to the Malawi woman if she needed to go to the grocery store on Fridays. When the woman said that she had gotten food for that day, Bhoomika repeated the phrase “you have food now” as an indicator of a confirmation check to make sure that she had understood what the Malawi woman wanted to say. She further used a comprehension check “you can go with us for grocery, ok?” at the end when the woman used the term “if there is no food before Friday” to clarify to Bhoomika with the anticipation that she could help her if she ran out of food before Friday. Though none of them used the Standard English expression “running out of food” to express what they wanted to convey, they could make each other understand by using other linguistic means. As the translingual practices are regarded as the use of linguistic and other semiotic resources the interlocutors use to achieve the communicative aim in a specific situation, the above example shows how both the interlocutors translanguaged for meaning making in that situation.

Shakuntala had also experienced a similar situation where she and her interlocutor had to optimize their disfluency and lack of knowledge of the exact English word but could achieve communicative success. This incident occurred during her interaction with a Saudi lady at her house, where Shakuntala was working as a nanny. According to her, the landlady was always a very calm and patient type of woman. She had to go to her restaurant to help her husband and other co-workers early in the morning and used to come back in the evening. So, Shakuntala had

to be at the Saudi lady's house from around 7 am to 6 pm six days a week. One day, the lady came home in the late afternoon to take some rest as she was not feeling well. Shakuntala was watching news on TV after she had finished her work and after feeding and putting the baby to sleep. The following excerpt from an interview with Shakuntala shows what happened after that and how both of them were engaged in a translingual practice:

She came home ... I gave her a glass of water... she looked so tired ... then I turned off the TV ... because I thought that it would disturb her... but she said, "you can leave it open."... I said, "Actually I had finished all my work so started watching the news and the baby is also sleeping ... It will disturb you ... you need some rest ... so I closed it." She lied on the couch, closed her eyes and continued, "you know I have to stand up the whole day, run here and there even inside the restaurant ... sometimes to the workers, sometimes to the counter... to the customers... I just get tired... but you can turn the TV." I said, "Yes I turned the TV... now you can take a nap for sometime." She said again to turn the TV and I said, "should I open it again?" she nodded her head and I opened the TV again. We both listened to the news ... I came home and told my son about it and she said that we do not say close/open. Instead, we say turn off/on the TV. Anyway, I and the lady understood each other that day... from that day I don't use the words open and close.... Turn is turn but what makes the difference is off and on [laughs].

The above excerpt shows how the lack of the correct term "turn on/off" in both the interlocutors' repertoire did not impact their conversation. Instead, through a couple more exchanges of the conversation, both of them could make it a successful conversation.

Shakuntala's use of the expression "should I open it again?" helped the Arabian lady understand that she was being asked for a confirmation. The literature on translanguaging shows that the interlocutors can make use of other semiotic devices in addition to the linguistic cues to make meaning in a particular context. In the above example, the Saudi lady's nodding of her head added to the intelligibility of the conversation and as a result, Shakuntala turned the TV on. Shakuntala could recall this incident only after I asked her if she remembered any incident where she and her interlocutor both did not know a Standard English word or structure. She used some

fillers and paused for a while and then she recalled the above incident and linked it with her son's telling her the correct words. When the second language learners translanguage, their use of the target language may be influenced by their first language or their interlanguage. In the above case, Shakuntala translated the words "banda garnu and kholnu", which are translated as "close and open" respectively. In Nepali, the same verb "banda garnu" is used to mean "close the door" and "turn off the TV". Similarly, the verb "kholnu" is used to mean "open the door" and "turn on the TV". On the other hand, the Saudi lady's use of the expression "turn the TV" without the particle "off/on" may be a feature of her interlanguage. Despite the differences in their linguistic repertoires, they could communicate successfully through negotiation strategies within their contact zone.

Ranjeeta has a different negotiation strategy in her translingual practice with other non-native speakers of English. In my "A day in the life of Ranjeeta", I observed that she mostly used gestures to make herself understand. She had also invited a classmate of hers from the community college for lunch. Her husband had left for work. Her son and elder daughter were watching some comedy program on a laptop in her son's room because they had already eaten lunch as they were hungry and could not wait until Ranjeeta's friend came for lunch. It was almost 2 pm. On the dinner table, when Ranjeeta, her friend and I were about to start eating our lunch, Ranjeeta asked her friend if she wanted the soup in a separate bowl. This is a tradition in Nepal that the hosts are supposed to give each variety of food prepared in different small plates and bowls. She had already given me the soup in a different bowl. When she asked her friend about it, the guest used a comprehension question, "in a ball?" Ranjeeta started explaining the tradition and that lady was staring at Ranjeeta with her mouth open. She asked Ranjeeta how it could be possible to give the soup in a "ball". She showed the gesture and asked again, "You

mean ball”? Ranjeeta said, “Yes, ball... B-O-W-L ball... do you want the soup in that? [Pointing to the bowl of soup kept in front of me]. The lady thanked Ranjeeta for spelling the word for her. Both of them experienced a problem understanding each other because of their different pronunciation of the same word. I was surprised when I was later reviewing my field notes. Ranjeeta could have shown her the bowl immediately after she saw the sign of non-understanding from her interlocutor, which she did only at the end. Instead, she spelled the word “bowl” for her interlocutor, which is one of the speaker-initiated strategies (Kirkpatrick, 2010) for making his/her listener understand him/her. What is more interesting is that when I asked Ranjeeta about this incident in my interview with her in our next visit, she said that she did not do that very often. It was her instantaneous decision to spell the word for her interlocutor. It shows that when the interlocutors translanguage, they do not have a fixed set of tools to use for different situations. Instead, they make use of different strategies in different communicative situations and even the same person may use different strategies from the options she/he has at his/her disposal.

If we analyze one of the previously mentioned excerpts from the group chat on Facebook, we can see how Shakuntala could successfully translanguage:

...

S : everytime I translate the words from Nepali to English, I mess up... today I wanted to give a ride to a friend and I said, “I can leave you.” He was confused because the context was that I was offering him help but the meaning was different. Ha ha

B : haha I have had the same feeling many times. When I heard someone saying “I can drop you”, I could accept the offer but why do we not just learn from what we hear? We go back to our original language and translate...

S : what can we do?... *aadat se majboor* [conditioned] haha

...

S : I thought she would come and sit with me in the car but I saw that she was walking towards the bus station...I got off my car and stopped her... she turned around and

said, that's fine,... you may be in hurry.... and I said that I can leave her at her home... she said, Oh, you want to take me to my home? I said yes and she said thank you and I took her to her house...

If we look at the part of the above excerpt where Shakuntala is talking about her use of the word “leave you”, she translated the word from Nepali where “chodnu” means both “leave” and “drop somebody” in Nepali. However, her interlocutor thought that she was being left and so she headed towards the bus station. When she was called by Shakuntala and when it was clarified that she would be given a ride, she also could not use the standard form “drop me/give me a ride”. Instead, she asked if Shakuntala wanted to take her to her home. Though both the interlocutors were using their idiosyncratic features, they could achieve what they wanted to. It shows that interlocutors may use their idiosyncratic features but the features may not hinder intelligibility and communicative success as Canagarajah (2013) mentions.

### **Affinity to Other Transnational Groups**

One interesting theme related to translanguaging that was found in the data collected from all three participants was their attitude towards other non-native speakers. They thought that they had the sense of solidarity with other non-native speakers of English because of their perception that both groups always lack something no matter how proficient they are. Recalling an international gathering at the community center where she lived, Bhoomika said to me in an interview:

*Bichara haru* [poor they], they are also like us ... leaving behind their home, families, *afno mato* [own earth] ... and *sabbhanda pani* [above all] with their incompetent English knowledge. There might be some more proficient speakers than others but still... we all are the same.



The use of the expression “*Bichara haru*” in Nepali shows one’s emotional feelings, like empathy towards others. Bhoomika’s use of this expression indicates that she feels bad for them for leaving their home country and coming to the US. She feels closer to them as she regards them to be like her and her feeling of proximity to them is due to the perceived incompetency of herself and that of those other international non-native speakers of English. Similarly, Shakuntala also expressed her opinion about other non-native speakers of English and said, “*Hami sabai eutai dyang ka mula hau* [laughs] [we are all in the same boat].” Like Bhoomika, she also admits that some of them are certainly highly proficient. On the other hand, Shakuntala has a slightly different way of looking at other non-native speakers of English. She thinks that they come from different cultural, religious, social, and economic backgrounds. However, her opinion towards them regarding the competency in English also makes her feel that it is the matter of who is in power. She said, “If Nepali was like English, then we would also feel the same ... *jasko Shakti usko bhakti* [surrender to the powerful]...rest of all are the same.” Her expression “*jasko Shakti usko bhakti*” indicates that she thinks that the status of English makes its speakers more privileged than others and therefore, the speakers of all other languages belong to the same category, with less power. All the above thoughts are connected to the idea of belonging to a group no matter what linguistic and cultural backgrounds people are from. If they are not proficient in English, they create a different group but find ways to build solidarity and establish successful communication within the group.

## **CHAPTER 4 CONCLUSION**

On the basis of the analysis and results of data, it can be concluded that the participants regard English as playing an important role in the reformulation of their identity, especially their gendered identity. Therefore, they are invested in improving their proficiency in English and are also engaged in several translingual practices. The overall conclusions of the study are presented for the three themes separately as follows:

### **Gendered Identity**

The participants consider English to be an empowering tool, which is similar to the findings of McMahon's (2001) study, in which she found how Japanese women in an English language class experienced being empowered and expressed that they could use English as a "weapon for self-empowerment" (p. 332). The initial self of my participants' female gender was shaped by the social values and norms before their arrival in the US. They expressed that they had gained psychological freedom but at the same time also believed that freedom was not to be misused. They saw English as an empowering tool. The association of the lack of English proficiency to the female gender was also due to the social beliefs they held. Shortly after their arrival in the US, they chose to be active listeners, that is, the silent period that the participants went through helped them develop their confidence to speak up. They chose to be silent and receptors to gain confidence, which is similar to Duff's (2002) study in which her participants' "silence protected them from humiliation" (p. 312). Resistance to expressing themselves in the beginning was a part of their perception towards themselves even though all the participants already had at least a high school degree from Nepal, where English is taught as a compulsory subject from primary to higher secondary levels. Their perceived gap between their imagined

identity and their real experience in the host country made them invest in the English learning process.

## **Investment**

The participants' access to education and English was influenced by their instrumental motivation while they were in Nepal. However, there was a shift in their motivation from only instrumental to both instrumental and integrative. Their desire to achieve the required level of English to gain admission in the formal education system in the US, and their desire to work are related to their instrumental motivation, whereas being a part of the English speech community and getting the recognition of good language users prompted them to put their effort and time in improving their English, especially their conversational skills. They were not only motivated to achieve their target but also invested in doing so. However, the extent of their investment varied. More importantly, it was not static in all contexts. The level and nature of their investment was found to be fluid and context specific. It went beyond their desire to use language for utilitarian purposes. Instead, they believed that they were reshaping their identity and maintaining it simultaneously by preserving their linguistic and cultural values. They thought that every time they faced instances of intelligibility or unintelligibility, they experienced their dynamic and changing identity, which either encouraged them to perform better or left them with frustration. However, success and failure were evaluated by the participants in particular speech events only. This notion is in line with the idea of investment described by Norton (2013) where she states that "investment in the target language is also an investment in a learner's own identity, an identity which is constantly changing across time and space" (pp. 50-51). The participants narrated several stories about how their household life and the social and religious beliefs influenced their quantity and quality of investment. They frequently referred back to their

situation in Nepal and associated their present investment with their initial self of their gendered identity and the present situation. Looking at the investment in relation to the clothes they wore, the time when they ate food, the assistance they got from other members in the family in the household work, their ability to drive to work and several other related factors, the participants described their complex and dynamic identity. This finding corroborated the research on investment by Skilton-Sylvester (2002) which noted that investigating a woman's investment is not complete without looking into her domestic and professional identities.

### **Translingual Practices: Negotiation Strategies**

The participants' use of different negotiation strategies indicated that their main aim was not to achieve the highest proficiency in the English language. Instead, their target was to satisfy some specific communicative goals in different contact zones. In spite of their limited linguistic resources, they collaborated with their interlocutors to achieve intelligibility and communicative success. Each communicative situation was tied to their aim to understand and be understood. This phenomenon is in line with Canagarajah's (2013) study of Siva, a vegetable seller and a native Tamil speaker, who was successful in translanguaging with an English speaker. He felt proud to have learned a few English words and structures through that translanguaging incident. However, he was "not aiming to develop competence in English" (p. 42). Similarly, the participants' felt that all non-native speakers of English belong to the same group. Their use of the Nepali proverb "*eutai dyang ka mula*" [in the same boat] indicated that they identified more with the outer group of non-native speakers than with the native speakers despite being highly motivated and invested. This finding is consistent with the notion of non-native solidarity described by Canagarajah (2013), where non-native speakers strive to make use of different negotiation strategies to bridge a gap created among them due to diversity. The participants' use

of the expression “*jasko Shakti usko bhakti*” [surrender to the powerful] clearly demonstrates that they feel less powerful due to their lack of proficiency in English.

Finally, the participants’ use of several different Nepali proverbs helped them express their feelings and emotions. On the one hand, they believed that English had helped them empower themselves and reshape their identity. Therefore, they attempted to invest more in improving their English. On the other hand, they felt greater affinity with other non-native speakers due to their feeling of solidarity with them. This phenomenon illustrates the complex feelings and emotions often associated with language learning.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Since the data were collected in the participants’ first language, I think that they were more comfortable expressing what they wanted to convey. They did not have to struggle to look for words they did not know. Their use of several Nepali proverbs and idioms indicates that they supported their views and beliefs using those proverbs and idioms. Although this study sought to delve into the lives of three participants to investigate their initial identity, their changing identity, investment in learning English, and their translingual practices, it must be acknowledged that it has some limitations. First, this study had a small sample size of only three Nepali women living in Michigan, which is not representative of the whole Nepali female community. Women in different parts of Nepal itself have different social and cultural backgrounds. Therefore, the analysis would have yielded more comprehensive and varied experiences if the sample size had been larger.

Second, data collected from multiple sources have certainly provided the opportunity to triangulate the emergent themes. In a few cases, what the participants were saying in their interview did not match their actual behaviors when observed in their real life scenarios.

However, the recording of their real interactions in their classrooms or in natural settings would have provided the real interactional patterns they adopted. This would bring greater precision to the analysis of their translingual negotiation strategies, which in this study was done only on the basis of what the participants said during their interviews and wrote in their journals. This might have distorted the reality of their success/failure to achieve a communicative goal.

Third, since I was an insider in the Lansing Nepali community through different programs I have volunteered to organize, there might have been some bias in the data collection process. However, the actualization of a woman's identity is not complete unless every aspect of her is investigated. Due to some social and cultural restrictions and values, I did not ask certain questions related to their roles and responsibilities. Therefore, I acknowledge that the data collected might not represent a complete picture of their gendered identity.

Fourth, although my observation through "A Day in the life of X" approach provided me with some opportunities to see how the participants interact with their children and with the guests at their home, the recording of the real interactions would have provided more detailed information about the interactional moves. Almost all the data reflect the participants' individual perceptions towards English, and English learning. It is a known fact that individual perceptions are subject to change and are also contingent upon an individual's emotional ups and downs. Therefore, data from the participants' family members would add to the validity of the data. Similarly, data from their tutors and teachers could have also contributed to see their perceptions of the participants. This way, we could see not only the participants' perceptions of themselves and of the outside world but also outsiders' perspectives toward them. After all, identities are discursively constructed.

## **Significance of the Study**

Although this study was conducted under certain limitations, it bears some pedagogical significance mainly for ESL teachers and to the people who are directly or indirectly related to an adult ESL population. These people could be the ESL program coordinators, curriculum designers, and even the people who work in the immigration offices. The reason is that findings of this study provide insights into what varied backgrounds immigrants and ESL speakers represent. This will help the teachers and other concerned people in four main ways. First, since the participants in this study were all women, their gendered identity has a lot to do with their perceptions towards the target language which to a great extent are influenced by their familial, social, cultural, and religious beliefs. Language learning is not just learning its linguistic aspects. Instead, it also incorporates learning the target language culture and pragmatics. Knowledge of the ESL learners' cultural values related to their perceived gender and their L1 pragmatic values would certainly help ESL teachers and curriculum designers. Second, immigrants and ESL learners may have different motives to learn the target language. Despite being motivated, they may not be invested in learning the language due to several restrictions such as their perceptions toward the target language speakers and other ESL speakers, their emotional feelings regarding their success and failure in achieving communicative success in a particular speech event, and their perceived attitudes of others toward themselves. Knowledge of their motivation for learning the language, and what types of investments they are making to achieve success are of paramount importance for ESL teachers to help such learners.

Third, although the immigrants and ESL learners may come with a low level of competence in the target language, they have varied linguistic and other semiotic resources at their disposal, which they can mobilize in a particular speech event while interacting with other

non-native speakers of English. Making use of the multiple resources the learners possess can help both ESL teachers and learners. This study also presents the findings related to different negotiation strategies that the participants employ to bridge the gap caused by the lack of proficiency among other transnational groups. Finding out such strategies used by relatively successful ESL learners is beneficial as this could guide ESL teachers in formulating strategy training such as teaching learners how to solve problems of communication breakdowns. Fourth, the study showed that immigrants encounter different types of communicative situations in their daily lives such as communication in the hospital, at a supermarket, at their children's schools, in their neighborhood, and so on, which is completely different from formal academic settings. This new knowledge can guide the designing of the ESL curriculum for the immigrants and the teaching topics can be tailored to their immediate and day-to-day communicative needs. In sum, the in-depth data collected from the immigrants and ESL learners about their background, their emotions and affective factors, motivation and investment, their transnational identity and translingual practices provide a clear picture of their multiple, varied, and dynamic identities which could enhance the design and implementation of an ESL curriculum.



## **APPENDICES**

## APPENDIX A

### Questionnaire

#### *Demography:*

- Name: .....
- Age: .....
- Where were you born? .....
- Who did you grow up with? .....
- Family members before marriage? .....
- Family members now? .....
- Where do you live? How long have you been living there?.....  
.....
- In which grade(s) do your children study? .....

#### *Education:*

- Did you learn English in Nepal? If yes, did you learn English at home/school/both?  
.....
- Did you attend English classes outside of these places, e.g. churches, literacy centers, voluntary groups?  
.....
- What is your first language? What other languages do you speak?  
.....

*Thank you for your participation.*

## APPENDIX B

### Interview Guide

#### *Migrant Experience*

- Parents'/grandparents' experiences; reasons for immigration to the US; initial impressions; adjustments; advantages/disadvantages

#### *Work*

- First job ever/in the US; job done before coming to the US; job(s) currently held; aspirations; relation with co-workers; ambitions

#### *Language Use*

- Use of heritage language/English at home/work/local communities; most frequently used language at home/work/socializing/conversing with relatives; whether it is important to encourage younger generations to use the heritage language/English and why?; retention vs loss of heritage language

#### *Identity*

- Would you consider yourself totally Nepali?; sense of ethnic identity and whether it has changed; Do you feel like a Nepali/Nepali American/Mixture of both/changing in situations?; Do your family members share household work?; Would the situation be the same if you were in Nepal?; What are your feelings being a woman in Nepal/the US?; How do you feel when you talk to Americans?; Do you feel comfortable to use English in the presence/absence of your family members when you are talking to Americans or

other international people?; How do you feel when you interact with your ESL teachers/peers at the community college you are studying at? .....

*Social Network/Socializing*

- Composition of local network, e.g. ethnic, religious; composition of wider network, e.g. whether ties to home country are maintained via visits, emails, skype, telephone, Facebook; hangouts – where/when/with whom; neighborhood and amount of socializing in the neighborhood; places of worship; gathering places for the immigrant/ethnic community; access to American families/friends; school/sports activities at your children's school.....

## **APPENDIX C**

### **Guideline for Keeping Journals**

Please write down about your conversation with anyone (native speakers of English or other international speakers). Keep in mind the following points while writing:

When/where/with whom you were talking; topic of discussion; how you felt about that conversation; and anything you would like to share about your understanding/use of English.

You could write your feelings in a diary or on the Facebook group we have created. Please feel free to write in any language you prefer (Nepali/English) or a mixture of both the languages.

**Thank you for your contribution.**

**Namaste!**

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