

Not Just a Heritage Language: Shifting Linguistic Landscapes of Ukrainian Immigrant
Families in English Canada

Abstract

The global interplay of political, economic, personal, and societal factors is causing growing numbers of people to search for better and safer places to raise their families, with the result that established values and linguistic beliefs in host countries will undergo inevitable revision and reconsideration. It has been well established that the priority for newcomers should be linguistic repertoire expansion by acquisition of an additional language rather than replacement of their native languages by the language of the mainstream society. With this in mind, the objectives of this project were to document and analyze participants' experiences regarding home language use and parenting in Canada, to discover successful strategies for the encouragement and maintenance of Ukrainian, and finally, to address the possible connections between ongoing events in Ukraine and immigrants' perception of their cultural and linguistic heritage. The project is informed by the theoretical frameworks of postcolonialism, language socialization, and symbolic power, while the data were analyzed by applying emergent themes and cross-case analysis. The participants represented cultural and linguistic differences among Ukrainian immigrants from different geographical regions of Ukraine. The results made it clear that heritage language maintenance is not a purely linguistic problem, and it is not divorced from political, social, and cultural circumstances in the host country, the immigrants' home country, or the imagined communities they are associated with. While geographic separation is fixed, recent immigrants bring with them their native language and culture, hoping to recreate a familiar lifestyle in the host country. The immigrants participating in this study were situated along a broad spectrum, ranging from those who felt happy, successful, and confident in their efforts of

language maintenance to those who felt doubtful and uncertain but were, in all likelihood, more realistic in their expectations.