LANGUAGE SOCIALIZATION IN THE INTERNATIONALLY ADOPTIVE FAMILY:
IDENTITIES, SECOND LANGUAGES, AND LEARNING

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By

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**Language socialization in the internationally adoptive family:**
**Identities, second languages, and learning**

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**ABSTRACT**

Language socialization research, or the study of how children and other novices are socialized *through* language and *to use* language, has long acknowledged that socialization is a bidirectional process (Ochs, 1988; Ochs & Schieffelin, 1984; Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986); however, relatively few studies directly address the ways in which novices socialize experts in interaction and how socialization processes are collaborative and co-constructed. The current study begins to fill this gap by examining interactions in three internationally adoptive families where native English-speaking parents have adopted children at school age from Russian-speaking regions. Specifically, I show how school-age children play a role in shaping family discourse by resisting, eliciting, and negotiating narrative routines, language-related episodes, and language choice in interaction with their parents.

Three adoptive families (10 adoptees, aged 4-17, and 5 adults) participated in the study. Each family consisted of English-speaking parents and at least one Russian-speaking child adopted at the age of five or older. Each family self-recorded mealtimes and other family interactions (e.g., literacy events, carpool, and game time) for six months, recording a total of about 25 hours of interaction. Regular interviews were also conducted with family members. Data from each family were considered
individually as a part of a collective case study and were analyzed longitudinally to identify patterns of interaction in each family’s conversations.

Findings from this study contribute to an understanding of how second language learners actively shape their learning environments at the same time that they take on interactional roles and construct identities. By viewing learning as a process of participation and identity formation, I conclude that for the international adoptees socialized in middle-class American families in this study, learning encompasses not only acquiring linguistic, pragmatic, and sociocultural knowledge, but also how to take on agentive roles in obtaining and negotiating such knowledge, which can have implications for classroom second language learning. The study further examines differences in routine talk about the day and spontaneous narratives, the social functions of language-related episodes, and relationships between language competence and language negotiation.
This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Francine Farrer Wright, and
to the memory of my father, Leon O. Wright, 1929-2006.
Acknowledgments

Kendall King redefines the term “mentor.” Her teaching, perspective, and insight have guided me in new directions, and her responsiveness, dedication, and professionalism offered unflagging support through numerous revisions of this project at all stages. I hope, in the end, that her input is adequately reflected here and this work meets her high standards.

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Of course, the work herein is the culmination of many individuals’ thoughts, ideas, and actions, but any mistakes or errors are my own.
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Introduction

Second language learning in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries has increasingly been depicted in applied linguistics literature as a phenomenon associated with sociopolitical and sociohistorical processes of globalization, migration, transnationalism, and post-colonialism (Block, 2007; Byram, 2008; Duff, 1995; Heller & Martin-Jones, 2001; Norton Pierce, 1995; Pavlenko, 2001; Phillipson, 1992; Rampton, 1999). At the same time that second language learning has come to be considered more fully within its macro social context, new approaches to second language learning research that emphasize the sociocultural and ecological foundations of learning have emerged (Block, 2003; Lantolf, 2001; Leather & van Dam, 2003; van Lier, 2004). These approaches are in keeping with trends in first language learning and literacy development that emphasize not only the role of interaction, but also the role of cultural beliefs and socialization processes that coincide with early language acquisition (Ochs & Schieffelin, 1984; Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986). Collectively, such studies provide perspectives on how social context at once affects and is affected by language learning processes.

The current study takes as its starting point the notion that second language learners actively shape the contexts of learning in which they participate and that the communication strategies they use can influence their interlocutors’ own interactional patterns. In this dissertation I draw on the language socialization research paradigm to examine the ways that culture, language, and learning intersect in internationally
adoptive families where English-speaking parents have adopted Russian-speaking children at school age. Most studies of language socialization in families have focused on how parents teach children to behave in culturally valued ways, both linguistically and socially. In this study I focus primarily on the reverse phenomenon, that is how children teach parents to change both the complexity and the type of talk in which the family engages and how such “socialization” leads to opportunities for new interactions to emerge in the family discourse. These processes, I argue, are related to the need for parents and children to establish intersubjectivity with one another and form cohesive family identities. In examining children’s negotiation and elicitation of as well as resistance to parents’ language, I show how second language learners can play an active role in determining their own language learning opportunities. These findings suggest the ways that intergenerational language change can occur through family interactions (through processes of social transformation in contrast to social reproduction) as well as how some children might be supported in developing a sense of agency in the learning process that can benefit them in contexts outside of the home, such as the classroom.

**Language socialization**

Language socialization research, which takes as its often cited goal the study of how children and other novices are socialized through language and to use language (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986, p. 2) has contributed to understandings of cultural difference in routes to first language acquisition (Ochs, 1988; Schieffelin, 1990) and literacy development (Heath, 1983; Michaels, 1981; Ochs, Taylor,
the acquisition of two languages in childhood (Lanza, 2004; Zentella, 1997); language shift (Kulick, 1992); approaches to psychological or developmental disorders (Capps & Ochs, 1997; Sigman, Kehres, & Capps, 1998); and the ways in which children learn about social structures and culturally appropriate behaviors (Heath, 1983; Ochs, 1988; Ochs & Taylor, 1995 among others). Although these foundational studies and theoretical writings touch on the ways children’s own practices (such as becoming competent partners in an interactional routine [Peters & Boggs, 1986]) influence their parents, the overwhelming emphasis in the language socialization research paradigm has been on the ways in which culture is reproduced through parents’ and other caregivers’ or teachers’ socialization of children (Garrett & Baquedano-Lopéz, 2002).

In their comprehensive review of language socialization research, Garrett and Baquedano-Lopéz (2002) identify language contact settings and bi- or multilingual families as one area of language socialization research that has shed light on processes of cultural transformation where children influence their parents’ language practices by introducing a different, majority, language to the home (Bayley & Schecter, 2003; King, 2001; Kulick, 1992). In this dissertation I focus on a slightly different language contact phenomenon in U.S. family life that is associated with the globalization and transnational trends of the late 1990’s, the creation of family across linguistic, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds through the adoption of older children from the former Soviet Union. Such adoptions initiate a process of family formation that involves negotiating limited shared linguistic resources to manage everyday life and, at the
same time, establish familial relationships and construct family identities. By linking the processes in these three adoptive families to what we know about language socialization in conventional families, I show how school-age children play an active role in shaping the family discourse by seeking out linguistic information, resisting certain discourse activities, and negotiating language choice in the family sphere. The changing language practices in these families are associated with taking care of the everyday, immediate needs of the family members as well as connecting everyday language use to the formation of identities across longer timescales.

Children as socializing agents and socialization across the lifespan

Becoming a parent is a transformative experience. A large body of work on parental adaptation attests to the stresses associated with the arrival of a child (Harrison & Magill-Evans, 1996; van der Pal, Maguire, Le-Cessie, Veen, Wit, Walther & Bruil, 2008). Becoming a parent also involves taking on or constructing new identities, participating in new social networks, and occupying new roles. For adults, parenting can be a socializing experience; though the processes associated with such socialization are different from the socialization of a child. Lutfey and Mortimer (2003), for example, count parenthood as one of the socializing experiences of adulthood in which adults, “learn about roles while simultaneously occupying them” (p. 186). Children themselves, it seems, play an important role in the socialization of their parents and other caregivers as their needs and behaviors place parents in a responsive position. In fact, recent research has emphasized the agentive role of
children, and specifically older children, in socialization processes and cultural change (Corsaro & Fingerson, 2003).

In keeping with a current interest in peer cultures and children’s affect on cultural change, language socialization research has also begun to investigate processes of peer interaction. In a study of language shift in Dominica, where adults promoted English over the local language Patwa, Paugh (2005) found that children used Patwa in peer group play despite possible sanctions from adults. She concluded that examining the children’s social words (rather than adult-adult or child-adult interactions) could provide a better understanding of the processes of language shift and prospects for maintenance. Similarly, in a study of three second language-learning children’s classroom performance, Willett (1995) emphasized the role that peer interaction played in helping the children establish good learner identities and successfully participate in classroom interactions.

Such studies focus on children’s interaction with one another as a means of working out the cultural norms of the activities in which they are participating (e.g., the social functions of a minority language in the adult world or the routines of a classroom in a new school system); however, they do not specifically deal with the ways in which peer interactions, and subsequently peer cultures, influence the older generation. Becoming a parent and becoming a family are in many ways dependent on the interactional back-and-forth in the parent-child relationship. While such interactions are, as decades of language socialization research have shown, influenced by cultural beliefs and societal norms, they can also be influenced in moment-to-

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moment interactions by the needs of children, their interactional roles, and the practices they themselves establish. As Luykx (2005) noted, “The notion that children’s language might be instrumental in the language socialization of adults [emphasis original] has received virtually no serious study” (p. 1408). For adoptive families where kinship ties are based on a social contract rather than blood relations (which are privileged in Western conceptions of kinship and family [Grovetant, Dunbar, Kohler, & Esau, 2007]), such interactions construct family, and adoptive families in turn are in some ways transformative of conventional cultural norms of what is family and who can be parents and children (Melosh, 2002; Pertman, 2001; Volkman, 2005).

In this dissertation I identify three main aspects of child language that influence the interactional strategies that parents use: (a) the child’s language competence (both productive and receptive), (b) the communicative strategies used by the child (specifically resistance moves, elicitations, and language choice), and (c) socialization from external sources (e.g., the school environment or the children’s prior cultural and linguistic backgrounds). The analyses focus primarily, however, on the second of these three aspects of child language, i.e. the strategies the children use to negotiate the family conversations. I argue that this strategy use is connected with both linguistic and social needs and preferences of the children in each family (e.g., to engage a specific parent in conversation or to obtain linguistic information needed to participate in the conversation), and that these needs and preferences are more transparent in the internationally adoptive families involved in this study than in
conventional (both monolingual and bilingual) families because of the need for parents and children to establish intersubjectivity and become a family across apparent linguistic and cultural lines in their daily interactions.

More specifically, in these chapters I examine three discursive practices identified as sites of family language socialization in prior research: narrative talk about the day (Ochs & Capps, 2001; Ochs & Taylor, 1995; Ochs et al., 1992) language-related episodes and metalinguistic talk (Blum-Kulka, 1997; DeGeer, Tulviste, Mizera, & Tryggvason, 2002; Ely, Berko Gleason, MacGibbon, & Zaretsky, 2001; Swain & Lapkin, 1995), and code-switching (Auer, 1984; Lanza, 2004; Zentella, 1997) to show how children’s initiations and responses to these types of talk influence parents’ discourse strategies. In conclusion I find that parents’ and school-age children’s collaborations in determining family discourse practices yield opportunities for the family to construct identities that are shaped by the children’s contributions in terms of the stories they tell, the definitions and discussions of word meanings they elicit, and the languages they choose in family conversations.

Why internationally adoptive families?

The rates of adoption of children from abroad by American citizens increased rapidly at the turn of the twentieth century, and this phenomenon coincided with growing interest in multiculturalism and ethnic awareness in the United States (e.g., de Anda, 1997; La Belle, 1996; Leistyna, 2002). Boston Globe journalist Pertman (2001) made the claim that adoption contributed to this trend of multiculturalism in
the United States by bringing together families across racial, ethnic, and cultural lines. Sociologists and anthropologists have also taken up this argument, theorizing that adoption is at once reproductive of societal norms (through the formation of nuclear families and kinship relations in contractual agreements) while at the same time disruptive of notions of the culturally and racially homogenous family through lesbian and gay adoptions, transracial adoptions, and transnational adoptions (Esposito & Biafora, 2007; Stryker, 2004; Volkman, 2005). The adoptive family then, contributes to multiculturalism in the U.S. at the micro level of the individual family.

Given the potentially “revolutionary” nature of the adoptive family in American (and other) cultures, it is curious why very few studies focus on the sociocultural aspects of language use in the adoptive family. Recent trends in socio- and applied linguistics focus on the use of language and discourse in the construction and negotiation of identities and, as mentioned above, in the process of socialization (De Fina, Schiffrin, & Bamberg, 2006; Lin, 2008; Tannen, Kendall, & Gordon, 2007). However, the existing linguistics studies of international adoptees are predominately limited to three areas of investigation: (a) the English language competence of younger adoptees (in order to evaluate these children for speech-language therapy services), (b) the language attrition of international adoptees (Isurin, 2000), and (c) the second language acquisition processes of older adoptees (Philp & Duchesne, 2008; Sato, 1990). An additional line of research in sociolinguistics has looked at the construction of “waiting children” in the pre-adoption phase (McIlvenny & Raudakoski, 2005).
Two of these studies, Philp and Duchesne (2008) and Sato (1990), in particular point to the ways in which social interaction can influence the language development of international adoptees. Sato, for example, found that two adopted boys had not acquired English past tense morphology even after a year of living with English-speaking parents and attending an English medium school. She concluded that conversational interaction alone was not facilitative of morphological development because learners could rely on other linguistic means for making meaning (i.e. adverbs like “yesterday” to mark past time); however, she did not provide data from the everyday conversations the boys had with parents and teachers to show what aspects of the conversation in specific could have affected the boys’ development. Philp and Duchesne (2008) do address the issue of input data, showing that one adoptee’s classmates in an Australian school provided “both a model for language and a context for using language” (p. 94). However, a detailed study of language use and language learning in the internationally adoptive family that connects language learning processes with the social context, local discourse, and processes of identity formation has yet to be carried out. The current study attempts to fill this gap.

Language in the adoptive family
At the same time that adoptive families can contribute to the study of language socialization processes by foregrounding processes through which parents come to know about their children’s language competencies and interactional needs, sociolinguistic and discourse analytic approaches to the study of family language can
also contribute to understandings of adoption. The “adoption effect,” which refers to adoptees’ relative disadvantage in schooling and over-representation in therapy settings, has been widely noted by adoption researchers (Grovetant et al., 2007). Recent work in this area has pointed to identity as the deciding factor in distinguishing between adopted children and non-adopted children. Because adoptees experience a type of “identity crisis,” the argument goes, associated with adoption and separation from the birth family, they are at greater risk in academic settings and for psychological disorders. This work, however, takes a static view of identity where adoptees move through pre-determined stages modeled on Erikson’s (1968) identity model (Grovetant, 1992, 1997).

Recent work in discourse analysis has shown how identities are constructed in interaction, in contrast to Erikson’s original ideas on the topic (see discussions in Lakoff, 2006; Wertsch, 1995). Speaker identities, discourse identities or so-called small, micro identities in turn can play a role in the construction of larger identities (and vice versa) (Georgakopoulou, 2006). Further, the construction of identities is influenced by and influences the context of interaction (Polanyi, 1995). In addition to discourse analytic work on identity construction, such processes have been closely tied to processes of learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The current study contributes to this perspective by showing how participating in family interactions not only influences the development of second language-learning adoptees’ communicative competence as predicted by Ochs and Schieffelin (1986), but also allows for negotiations of what competencies are valued and displayed through negotiations of
identities. More specifically, I examine identity construction in the internationally adoptive family on three main levels (a) the participant structures, or “structural arrangements of interaction” (Phillips, 2001), found in everyday interactions, (b) the repetition of these structures and participants’ interactional roles that make up more cohesive versions of “self”, and (c) reference to past histories (specifically in narrative activities or through choice of the heritage language) as a means of establishing a family identity on even longer timescales.

Research questions
With this discussion as a backdrop, the research questions for the study are as follows:

1. What language socialization processes are evident in internationally adoptive family interactions (e.g., interactional routines or patterns that can be connected with larger cultural values or social structures)?
2. What role do school-age adoptees play in shaping language socialization processes in family interactions?
3. How can processes of language learning and language socialization be (re)conceptualized in light of the findings from questions one and two above?

Conclusion
In this dissertation I present three case studies of language socialization in the internationally adoptive family. In doing so, I provide a glimpse of what post-adoption family life is like and how children and parents socialize one another into ways of interacting that meet their basic linguistic needs, help to construct themselves
as a unified family, and allow for newness and difference through compromising on hybrid practices (such as code-switching). Each of these families is different in its makeup (i.e. single vs. dual-parent homes), language use and language-learning choices (e.g., to use Russian or not, to homeschool, or to emphasize literacy activities), and in the attitudinal orientations of parents toward language and language learning (i.e. seeing themselves as facilitators of language development vs. models for language development).

By studying how these contextual differences shape the learning environment of the children, we see how the local context influences the second language learning processes of these children. By studying how parents come to know what their children need in interaction through the different elicitation and response strategies of the children, we see how children are agentive in their own learning processes and how second language learning constructs the local discourse context. This collaboration, represented in a bidirectional process, is what I consider to be evidence for the co-construction of socialization processes.

Organization of the dissertation

In keeping with a collective case study approach, which is described in greater detail in Chapter 1, I present each family individually below in its own chapter and consider a different area of linguistic analysis for each family’s data. The organization of this dissertation deviates slightly from that of typical applied linguistics dissertations in that the literature review and coding procedures for each area of linguistic analysis will be presented within the respective chapter in which that
linguistic feature is discussed. The organization of the dissertation is as follows: the following chapter (Chapter 1), describes the motivation for the design of the study by discussing the contributions of language socialization research to the study of language learning and the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of the research paradigm; Chapter 2 presents background on international adoption in the United States and the study of international adoptees in language learning and educational research; Chapter 3 discusses the methods used for the recruitment, data collection, and transcription of the data; however, more demographic information and the coding procedures for each area of analysis will be presented in the respective chapters; Chapter 4 examines the narrative routine in Family One; Chapter 5 discusses the use of language-related episodes and metalinguistic talk in Family Two; and Chapter 6 describes code-switching in Family Three; finally, Chapter 7 presents a discussion of the implications of the study and the conclusion.
Chapter 1: The language socialization paradigm: Foundations, theory, and methods

The current study draws on theory, methods, and prior findings of work undertaken within the language socialization paradigm (Ochs & Schieffelin, 1986) to understand language use and language learning in the internationally adoptive family. In this chapter I will first present the basic motivating ideas for the language socialization paradigm and its contribution in fusing psychological perspectives on language acquisition with anthropological and sociological perspectives on socialization. I will then review research that developed from the foundational work in the field and describe the contribution of such work to other areas of language learning such as literacy development, schooling, and bilingualism. After considering the empirical contribution language socialization research has made, I will backtrack a bit to consider the theories of learning that underlie the original work and how notions of competence and acquisition in language socialization research have been revised as theories of learning have evolved and changed. More specifically, I will consider theoretical notions of activity, participation, and identity as metaphors for learning. Finally, I will turn to methodological approaches characteristic of language socialization research, which have been the source of some controversy from within the field over what constitutes an authentic language socialization study (Garrett, 2004) and from outside of the field as to what use such methodology and findings
have for understanding language acquisition processes (Gregg, 2006). I conclude with a rationale for the design of the current study as a collective case study.

**The language socialization paradigm**

Studies within the language socialization research paradigm that deal with child language learning in particular have focused on cross-cultural differences in routes to first language acquisition (emphasizing the fact that child-directed speech is neither universal nor necessary) (Ochs, 1982; Ochs & Schieffelin, 1984); cross-cultural differences in home literacy and discourse practices that unveiled inherent biases in traditional schooling (Heath, 1983; Michaels, 1981; Philips, 1983; Scollon & Scollon, 1981); the role of cultural beliefs and other contextual factors in community language shift and bilingual language use (Kulick, 1992; Lanza, 2004; Zentella, 1997), and, more recently, the role of context and identity construction in second language learning (Bongartz & Schneider, 2001; Duff, 1995; Hawkins, 2005; Willett, 1995) and multi-modality and literacy learning (Gee, 2003). Although not all the studies included in this review meet the following criteria, the methodological hallmark of language socialization research according to Garret (2004), longitudinal, ethnographic research design that allows for in-depth understanding of the connections between language learning, language use, and cultural beliefs in a particular population or community. However, cross-sectional studies have also informed this research by providing quantitative data generalizing patterns in one or more particular cultural groups or social classes (e.g., Blum-Kulka, 1997; Melzi & King, 2003; Ochs & Taylor, 1995).
The language socialization paradigm expanded on Ochs and Schieffelin’s (1979) developmental pragmatics paradigm to include not only grammatical and pragmatic development, but also attention to larger social and cultural aspects of children’s language development. Language socialization research integrates two larger fields in the social sciences, the sociological and anthropological study of socialization with psycholinguistic or linguistic analyses of language acquisition and development, primarily through ethnographic research. The foundational tenets for this work are that and that (a) the process of acquiring a language is affected by the process of becoming a competent member of a society and (b) the process of becoming a competent member of society is realized through language by acquiring knowledge of its functions, social distribution, and interpretations in and across socially defined situations, i.e., through exchanges of language in particular social situations (Ochs & Schieffelin, 1984, p. 277).

**Communicative competence**

As a starting point, Ochs and Schieffelin (1984) conceptualized language learning as the development of communicative competence (Hymes, 1974). At the same time, or arguably even before, young children develop grammatical structures to communicate in a language, they are also learning pragmatic and social norms that govern the use of certain linguistic structures in certain contexts. Hymes (1974) writes,

> Within the social matrix in which it acquires a system of grammar a child acquires also a system of its use, regarding persons, places, purposes, other
modes of communication, etc. – all the components of communicative events, together with attitudes and beliefs regarding them. There also develop patterns of the sequential use of language in conversation, address, standard routines, and the like. In such acquisition resides the child's sociolinguistic competence (or, more broadly, communicative competence), its ability to participate in its society as not only a speaking, but also a communicating member (p. 75).

The importance of understanding the development of grammatical competence as one aspect of overall communicative competence was illustrated by Ochs’ (1988) seminal study of language development in Western Samoa. The Samoan language marks ergativity, or the status of a noun as agent or patient (separately from subject and object), through nominal case marking. Ochs found that Samoan children acquired ergativity marking in their native language much later than children acquiring other languages with the same morphological feature, such as Turkish, Kaluli, and Mayan. This difference, however, could not be explained by grammatical constraints or perceptual issues alone because the Kaluli marking of ergativity resembled that of Samoan in its low perceptual saliency (measured using Slobin’s [1982] list of features). What did differ between the Kaluli and Samoan uses of the ergative marker, however, was sociolinguistic in nature. In Samoan culture, the ergative marker could be considered a sociolinguistic variable because it was omitted from grammatically obligatory positions in certain social situations, i.e. predominately in informal conversations at home and in women’s speech, indicating that use of the
ergative marker was dependent on the social distance of speakers. Because of this, Samoan children heard less of the ergative case marker than their Kaluli counterparts and therefore took a longer time to acquire it.

The explanation for why Samoan children acquired ergativity later than children who speak other languages that also mark ergativity, therefore, lies in an understanding of the context and the interactions children have in their everyday home lives rather than in an understanding of the grammatical system of the standard language. As Ochs (1988) argued, this omission of the ergative case marker was not an aspect of caregiver speech *per se* (i.e. simplification for the sake of the child hearer), but rather an aspect of the social context in which the children were acquiring the language (i.e. the home). The important finding from this study was that children acquired the language to which they were exposed and which characterized their environment. Simply put, to become a competent member of the Samoan household, young Samoan children were not required to use the full range of morphological marking available in their language.

*Parent strategies*

In addition to finding that the development of grammatical morphemes, such as ergative marking depended on the sociolinguistic context of the child, Ochs (1988) also found that Samoan caregivers did not simplify their speech to young children but rather used other means of eliciting talk, such as interactional routines that included prompting or “calling out” sequences (Schieffelin, 1990; Watson-Gegeo & Gegeo, 1986). These strategies taught children important social roles and values as well as
provided a framework for grammatical acquisition (Peters & Boggs, 1986). To serve as an example, Schieffelin (1990) found that Kaluli adults also did not engage in interactional strategies typical of Western middle-class parents such as simplifying speech phonologically or morphologically or expanding on children’s utterances. Rather, Kaluli adults used a variety of means for “fitting (or pushing) the child into the situation” (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986, p. 293). These strategies were associated with the Kaluli belief that children must be “shown how to speak” (p. 292). Kaluli parents did this by using a specific teaching strategy in which the parent provides a model of the language the child should use followed by the directive “ɛlɛma” or “say it like that”. This directive is used in order to teach the child “the social uses of assertive language (teasing, shaming, requesting, challenging, reporting)” (Ochs & Schieffelin, 1984, 292) and not uses the child is assumed to already know (such as begging). In the Kaluli study, then, parents’ language teaching strategies were based on two main factors: the belief that children need to be explicitly taught certain speech acts and the belief that children are not valid conversational partners.

One question that was not directly addressed, however, in these studies was how the routines in parent-child interaction evolved and grew over time. While the very nature of an interactional routine includes the notion of change, through which children and novices learn a routine and are finally able to initiate and use parts of it in spontaneous interactions without prompts and elicitations (Peters & Boggs, 1986), the focus has been primarily on how children gain autonomy in enacting the routine in interaction and not on how parents respond to children’s growing competence. While
this question has garnered attention in recent years and even appears as a topic of
discussion in Ochs’ early writing on the bidirectionality of language socialization
(e.g., Ochs, 1988, pp. 223-226), few studies have explicitly taken the novice-as-expert
point of view.

Answering the question of how novices influence experts’ use of interactional
strategies and routines requires an explicit focus on conversational moves or discourse
strategies used by children that are consistent and repeated and that place parents in
reactive positions. By studying such child-directed processes, we can better explain
how language socialization occurs in families with older children (as children are
exposed to socialization outside of the home, or as in the case of older adoptees, bring
prior socialization to the family with them), how children develop agency and
autonomy in the family sphere, and how younger generations affect societal change
on a more macro scale.

*Older children*

Following in the foundational work by Ochs and Schieffelin, researchers
applied the interest in connections between culture and language development or the
development of communicative competence to the learning experiences of older
children. Such studies focused on the acquisition of literacy and school-related
discourses (Heath, 1982, 1983; Michaels, 1981), the maintenance of a minority
language or bilingual language practices (Zentella, 1997), and socialization into and
through narrative practices (Ochs & Taylor, 1995; Ochs, Rudolph, Taylor & Smith,
1992). These studies brought to light inherent biases in traditional schooling and the
social factors surrounding educational outcomes for different populations of students in the United States.

Heath’s (1983) study of language socialization in three different communities in the Piedmont Carolinas pointed to differences in home socialization across ethnic and socioeconomic lines and demonstrated the ways in which traditional schooling marginalized working class children. Other studies of school-age children’s discourse competencies have found that cultural patterns of socialization play a role in children’s readiness to conform to school norms and practices (Michaels, 1981; Philips, 1983; Scollon & Scollon, 1981). Further, studies of middle-class Anglo-American family socialization practices have found that the discourse practices in these families (such as problem solving narratives and metalinguistic discourse) coincided with discourse practices associated with schooling (Ely et al., 2001; Ochs et al., 1992). These studies represent foundational research that brought to light inequalities and biases in traditional education systems that served to maintain the power and dominance of certain cultural groups while marginalizing others.

It is important to note, however, that these studies focused on language socialization as cultural reproduction as mentioned in the introduction. Although the comparisons of cultural groups, social classes, and ethnicities brought to light differences in U.S. society and education, the general process examined in these studies is one of cultural transmission through home interactions. The basic assumption is made that children learn ways of talking and being as well as values and beliefs of their cultures through interaction with their caregivers and that these
discourses are carried across places and times from home to school. Cultural reproduction refers to the transmission of cultural norms from generation to generation (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Bourdieu introduced the concept primarily to explain how social inequities were passed down through schooling. These studies do not, for example, examine the reverse process when school-age children bring socialization from school into the home or how children develop their own practices and beliefs outside of the family sphere. In cases where family ideologies conflict with external value systems (such as those of the wider society or inherent in the education system), processes of cultural transformation can be seen to occur. This process of change in language practices is most apparent in studies of language shift (e.g., Dauenhauer & Dauenhauer, 1998; King, 2001, 2000; Kulick, 1992).

Studies of language shift in the home environment have examined how children influence parents and other family members to shift toward a majority language. Kulick (1992) for example examined cultural beliefs about the agency (or self will of children) along with socioeconomic changes in a community experiencing language shift in Papua New Guinea. He found that parents in the village interpreted vocalizations of children over the age of one as being produced in Tok Pisin, and not the local language Taiap. This interpretation, along with cultural ideas about children’s will and the belief that Tok Pisin was an easier language than Taiap and therefore was better suited for use with small children, led to suppression of Taiap in interaction with children in the community. Although this study focused on language use with very young children, it is a good example of how parents interpret children’s
linguistic productions and how such interpretations are based on cultural beliefs.

Kulick’s findings upset notions of language socialization as a process through which children acquire communicative competence in a language from parents and pointed to the fact that competence, and the sociocultural norms for language use that goes along with it, are negotiated in interactions between experts and novices. The children in the current study, who are older than the children discussed in Kulick’s study, have greater resources at their disposal for negotiating their parents’ interpretations and strategies. The children’s own strategy use at obtaining interactional assistance or avoiding engaging in certain discourse practices can also provide an additional influence on parents.

More recent research in language socialization, and specifically socialization studies that begin to look at how children socialize or influence their parents, have suggested revisions to the original notion of communicative competence by drawing on related theories of learning that emphasize participation and, subsequently, negotiation. Garrett and Baquedano-López (2002) outline the ways in which children can socialize their parents into use of a majority language in the home or through use of other modalities such as computer-mediated communication. They conclude that such processes, in which so-called “novices” take on expert roles, “call for a notion of competence that takes into account the inherent heterogeneity of culture and cross-cutting dimensions of power and identity that partially structure and organize that heterogeneity” (p. 346). In her study of bilingual language socialization in Aymara households, Luykx (2003) concludes that language socialization is better viewed not
“as a one-way process” but as a “dynamic network of mutual family influences” (p. 40). These conceptions of socialization and learning as participation in activities, which is related to identity construction, are in keeping with Lave and Wenger’s (1991) positing of learning as “situated peripheral participation.” This theoretical perspective draws on the notion of apprenticeship to show how learning and identity construction can be seen as one and the same process. As new members of a community of practice participate in the community, they both take on an identity of an “experienced” member and “learn” through such participation. This view departs from slightly, or reframes, Ochs’ (1988) original explanations of learning processes. In the following section I will discuss the metaphors of activity, participation, and identity in language socialization and language learning research and suggest ways in which the current study will contribute to views of situated learning by focusing on the novice’s influence.

Theories of learning: activity, participation, and identity
While the overarching goal of language socialization research was to understand children’s development of communicative competence and how socialization and language development coincided, the notion of communicative competence in and of itself does not provide an explanation for how such learning occurs. To better articulate language learning processes as part of socialization processes, in their collective writings Ochs and Schieffelin turned to Soviet psychology and activity theory that emphasized the role of culture and society in the development of individual cognitive processes.
Vygotsky and activity

In his writings on psychology, education and human development, Vygotsky emphasized the social, historical and collaborative nature of learning. Vygotsky (1978, 1981) theorized that all learning took place on two planes, first the external or social plane and then the internal plane of the learner: “Any function in the child’s cultural development appears twice, or on two planes. First it appears on the social plane, and then on the psychological plane. First it appears between people as an interpsychological category, and then within the child as an intrapsychological category” (1981, p. 163). The developmental space that occurs between two people in interaction is referred to by Vygotsky as the zone of proximal development (ZPD), defined as the distance between a child’s actual developmental level (determined independently) and a higher level of development that is dependent on assistance by a more competent other (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1991). In addition to positing that learning took place on different planes, Vygotsky also emphasized the role of speech in this process. His work on inner or private speech of the child directly challenged Piaget’s theories of childhood “egocentrism” by showing that such speech originated in social interaction with a more competent adult and actually represented processes of self-regulation through which the child internalized the new language and behavior (Vygotsky, 1978). In this way the activity is transferred from the interpsychological to the intrapsychological plane.

To expand on Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory of learning, Leontiev (1979) further articulated the role of activity (also equated with Bourdieu’s notion of practice
in Ochs [1988], p. 255) in learning processes. Wertsch (1979) summarized the importance of a notion of activity in Soviet psychology as follows, “Soviet authors constantly stress that no progress can be expected from a psychology based on a framework in which the human being is viewed as passively receiving input from the physical and social environment. They emphasize that only by interacting with the material world and with other humans can we develop a knowledge of reality” (p. 11). Ochs (1988), drawing on Leontiev (1979), Marx (1959) and Vygotsky (1962) views activity as both a “behavioral unit, in the sense of a sequence of actions associated with particular motivations and goals…and a process, in the sense of praxis” (p. 14) that mediates linguistic knowledge and sociocultural knowledge.

It is within the activity then that language and culture or language and society coalesce. This can be seen not only in everyday events in family settings such as mealtimes or carpool, but also in instructional settings where different learning events are organized around different types of activities (seatwork, sharing time, pairwork) as well as experimental settings where different data elicitation instruments require participants to engage in different types of tasks. In all of these settings, different types of language are used and different opportunities for learning are available according to the activity in which participants are engaged. In addition, sociocultural models or belief systems (values regarding the importance of family mealtime, philosophies of what makes a “good student,” or hypotheses and paradigms motivating a research study) organize the activity and thereby the language used at the same time that the linguistic knowledge itself constructs the activity and organizes the
sociocultural knowledge. In sum, Ochs (1988) writes: “The net effect is that children are acquiring linguistic and sociocultural knowledge hand-in-hand as they assume various communicative and social roles in language activities” (p. 17). This formulation of language socialization, however, makes several assumptions. The first is that sociocultural knowledge (and linguistic knowledge for that matter) are static entities that represent a sort of “end state” for the language-learning child. The second is that communicative and social roles are set or somehow predetermined to achieve sociocultural and linguistic knowledge. While Ochs noted in the conclusion to her work that language socialization is bidirectional, “both members and novices are active, interactive, and vulnerable [to language socialization]” (p. 225) and suggested that “questions by novices to members” in specific “may reorder the thinking of both, despite their difference in knowledge and power” (p. 226), she does not delve deeply into the bidirectionality of language socialization processes in her own analyses.

**Participation**

In an effort to address the issues of bidirectionality and collaboration in language socialization, more recent studies have drawn on theories that emphasize participation as a key to understanding learning processes. Participation as a term emphasizes the human action in a given activity rather than the activity itself, or the “person acting in the world” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 49). This concept is central to Lave and Wenger’s (1991) explanations of situated learning and apprenticeship as “peripheral situated learning” through which a peripheral member, or apprentice,
becomes a competent member through doing something in a specific location and
time. This theory reflects and is influenced by the activity theories discussed above
and the work of Bourdieu (1977) on social practice, however, Lave and Wenger
emphasize the negotiated nature of participation and, in effect, learning: “Participation
is always based on situated negotiation and renegotiation of meaning in the world.
This implies that understanding and experience are in constant interaction – indeed,
are mutually constitutive” (p. 52).

Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) have further invoked the metaphor of
participation for understandings of second language learning: “Applying such an
approach [Participation Metaphor] to SLA involves shifting the focus of investigation
from language structure to language use in context, and to the issues of affiliation and
belonging” (p. 156). As the focus of the current study is to understand how learning
and socialization take place within a family setting between family members who
recently gathered together under a contractual agreement to become a family, the
issues of “affiliation and belonging” seem to be at the heart of the communicative and
learning processes that take place. Pavlenko and Lantolf propose to study
participation through learners’ first person accounts of their language learning
experiences (autobiographical narratives). However this approach allows for only one
perspective on identity construction (i.e. analysis of the learner’s reflective
representation of these processes) rather than consideration of how negotiations in the
second language in interaction are part of both participating in the local context (in
this case the family) and learning. The current study attempts to expand views on
how participation and identity construction are related to language learning by analyzing everyday interactions between family members as they negotiate their linguistic and communicative resources.

**Identity**

Viewing learning as a process of participation also invokes the notion of identity. Learning, in Lave and Wenger’s (1991) view, is a process of identity formation in which apprentices take on new identities as members through the learning process. Taking this expanded, or perhaps postmodern, view of learning as participation allows for a greater consideration of communicative competence as not a static end state but as sociocultural knowledge that is negotiated between experts and novices. Adding the element of negotiation to and understanding of communicative competence provides a way to account for cultural, social, and linguistic change. Further, conceptualizing becoming a “competent member” of a society as a process of identity construction allows for an integration of discourse analytic perspectives on the social construction of identity with understandings of learning processes. In the previous section I have outlined the basic goals and underlying ideas of language socialization research and discussed the learning theories that informed Ochs and Schieffelin’s (1986) foundational work. I then turned to more recent theories that emphasized the notion of participation, and subsequently identity formation in learning processes. I will now turn to the notion of identity in both educational and discourse analytic research to examine how the two different avenues can be integrated under the rubric of language socialization.
Identity construction, discourse, and learning

To better visualize the connection between learning and identity formation that Lave and Wenger (1991) posit occurs through participation, it might be useful to consider some examples of contexts studied in processes of second language learning: the classroom and naturalistic contexts of second language use (such as study abroad host families). Hawkins (2005) noted that second language-learning identities of children in particular remain underinvestigated because of the difficulty in having children talk about identities in the same way adults can. However, a small set of studies have shown important links between establishing a “good student identity” or affiliative identity toward schooling through both participation in classroom activities and home socialization that influenced language learning and academic outcomes for the children (Hawkins, 2005; Toohey, 2000; Willett, 1995). The good student identity, according to Hawkins, is one that is ascribed onto the student by the structures of the school, but also one that the children construct for themselves through active participation that resonates with the teachers’ and school’s idea of success. Viewing the classroom as a social context of learning, then, provides a more holistic view of how learning can be a process of identity formation by taking on the role of the good student.

There are two main processes that have been elucidated in research on second language learning in naturalistic settings. The first is how identities (such as migrant, Limited English Proficient, working class, etc.) are ascribed onto individuals by power holders such as policymakers and teachers that place constraints and
affordances on individuals for opportunities to learn, both in terms of access to classes and sites of learning and in attitudes or beliefs that influence treatment within those learning settings (Lin, 2008; Norton Pierce, 1995). Block (2007) in writing on identity in second language learning for example identifies ethnicity and race, national identity, migrant identity, gender, social class, and language identity as different “identity types” that are co-constructed individually and collectively. Such studies often draw on interview data or narrative accounts of language learning. A second approach is to understand how identities or roles are constructed and negotiated in interaction and thereby how interaction, learning, and identity construction intersect in a process over time. The current study takes this latter approach by focusing on speaker roles and participant structures.

**Speaker roles**

Speaker roles refer to the turn-taking and interactional roles individuals take in a given conversation. In language socialization in family interactions, continuity between smaller speaker roles such as speaker-hearer, questioner-answerer have been found to correspond to larger roles such as mother, father, child, spouse, etc. Ochs and Taylor (1995), for example, found that the speaker roles of introducer, primary recipient, and problematizer/problematizee aligned with a gendered “father knows best” cultural model in talk about the day routines in middle-class American families. Speaker roles, however, can also differ from assumed “macro” roles as novices or those in positions of relatively less power can find ways to exert control over interactions with those in power (Jacoby & Gonzalez, 1991; Kamberelis, 2001). These
studies have sought to understand how social transformation can be achieved in reversals of such roles.

One construct that has been important in studying second language classroom discourse in particular is that of the participation structure. In her study of Warm Springs school children, Philips (2001) identified participant structures in the teacher-fronted classroom in which children were required to participate:

Within the basic framework of teacher-controlled interaction, there are several possible variations in structural arrangements of interaction, which will be referred to from here on as ‘participant structures.’ Teachers use different participant structures, or ways of arranging verbal interaction with students, for communicating different types of educational material; and for providing variation in the presentation of the same material to hold children’s interest (p. 306).

She found that the Warm Springs children were consistently disadvantaged in the classroom interactions because these participation structures did not match up with those valued and socialized at home, and that the local interactional roles of the teacher and students in the classroom lined up with macro identities and larger power structures at work in society. Similarly, further work by Ochs and Taylor (1995) on narrative talk in family mealtimes also relied on the notion of participation structures to understand how collaboration occurs in family storytelling and middle-class children are socialized into a type of problem solving discourse valued in Western academic settings (Ochs et al, 1992).
Identity construction through participation in classroom routines has also been found to benefit young second language learners. For instance, Willett (1995) conducted a year-long ethnographic study of a mainstream first grade classroom that consisted of four Limited English Proficient (LEP) students (three girls and one boy). She found that over the course of the year, the three girls collaborated in the daily seatwork routine and were able to acquire grammar skills as they developed in other areas as well such as literacy. The group of three girls were able to move from the appearance of competent participation in phonics seatwork (through stringing together linguistic chunks used by more competent members of the class) to using syntax for meaning, interpreting meaning from written symbols, acquiring academic norms, and constructing identities as competent students (p. 494). The LEP boy in the class, however, although he received more feedback from teachers and aides, did not reach the same level of language competence because of his lack of access to the collaborative interactional routines of the girls. This study explicates the ways in which larger contextual structures (i.e. gender, classroom seating arrangements, and routine discourse) can organize linguistic development in varying ways for individual learners.

In addition to studies finding that interactional roles can replicate and reinforce macro identities, other studies have found that macro identities (such as expert and novice) can be negotiated in moment-to-moment interactions through negotiations of speaker roles and routines. Studies that have provided micro-analyses of the construction of “expert” and “novice” roles in interaction have found that these
roles are often fluid and co-constructed (Jacoby & Gonzales, 1991). As an example, in an analysis of interactional sequences taken from group meetings of a university physics team, Jacoby and Gonzales (1991) used conversation analysis and ethnomethodology to demonstrate how “macro” roles (such as tenured professor, doctoral student, etc.) do not always determine expert-novice relationships. The micro interactions themselves reveal that “participants negotiate who is more or less knowing at particular interactional moments” (p. 174). This conceptualization of expert-novice (i.e. as locally produced), according to Jacoby and Gonzales, not only accounts for the bidirectionality of language socialization but also for “change and innovation in communities of practice” (p. 174). Understanding how school-age adoptees influence their parents by taking on different speaker roles and interactional or discourse identities can help us to understand how parents respond to children and how they collaborate to form family discourse practices and coherent family identities.

Repetition and time in identity construction
The study of identity construction is by no means confined to analysis of speaker roles and routines; although, this has been a productive line of inquiry for language socialization research because of the fact that parent directives, elicitations, and prompts shape children’s language productions and thereby constitute moments of potential language learning and socialization. Other researchers have examined discourse strategies and processes such as referring terms and repetition and other devices to show how family members create not only individual identities within the
family interactions, but also a collective family identity (Gordon, 2007). As Gordon notes, such studies have taken an intertextual view to show how these discourse strategies are repeated across interactions and thus provide a “clearer portrait” of family identity. Coherence of identity, or sense of self, which is important to human development (Erikson, 1968) and, more specifically, adoptees’ development (Grovetant, 1992, 1997) from an interactional perspective can be studied in its relationship to repetitions over time (Lemke, 2000). As Lemke (2000) notes, “the formation of identity, or even fundamental change in attitudes or habits of reasoning, cannot take place on short timescales” (p. 282).

In this study I utilize the concept of the timescale in the study of adoptive family discourse in three main ways (a) to examine how repetitions of interactional roles (i.e. questioner, resister, etc.) come to represent a speaker identity for individuals in the family conversations, (b) to show how repetitions of these speaker roles over time lead to more permanent identities (such as unwilling participant in family interactions), and (c) to examine examples where family members make reference to longer timescales, usually through narratives or parts of narratives about the distant past in order to share knowledge and experiences about a time (i.e. pre-adoption time) in which the family was not together and subsequently co-construct identities of themselves as adoptees, children, parents, and families.

My focus for each of these three approaches to identity construction is the way in which children initiate or create discursive space for this type of long-term identity construction through the shorter-term roles they enact. In this way the current study
provides a view of language learning as not only negotiated and learner-directed but also connected with identity construction on multiple levels. As the children take on new roles, and importantly, place their parents in reactive roles, new possibilities and identities are constructed. This process, I argue, coincides with the children’s learning both the language needed to initiate and enact these processes, but also the norms and values associated with taking agency in the middle-class U.S. family.

Methodological perspectives
I have suggested that language socialization draws on longitudinal, ethnographic data to present emic perspectives on language use, language ideologies, and language development. Because of the primary assumption that these phenomena are contextually sensitive, language socialization studies usually take the form of ethnographies or case studies. Ethnographies such as Ochs’s (1988) study of language development of Western Samoan children served to illustrate cultural differences in routes to and outcomes for first language acquisition. Case studies, which typically focus on an individual language learner, teacher, speaker, or writer in applied linguistics (Duff, 2008), have pointed to variation within such communities. Lanza’s (2004) study of infant bilingualism, for example, found that parent strategies varied across families even within the same community. Lanza’s two case studies were unique in that both the children’s and the parents’ language were considered as factors in the children’s outcomes. Other case studies in applied linguistics that have focused on language socialization-related processes in the home, such as Sato (1990) or Cruz-Ferreira (2006) have taken the learner and learner development within the family as
the focal point of analysis and not the parents’ language itself. In this study, I focus on both parents’ and children’s language, and more specifically on how parents’ language practices change in response to children’s strategies.

In the current study, data from three adoptive families are presented as a collective case study in which each family is considered discretely within its own context. Naturally occurring interactions with and between all family members are considered for the analyses. The advantage of this approach is to provide an emic understanding of the language practices of each family in order to better understand the range of variation that can exist across families (although, the three families considered here are in some ways exceptional because of their willingness to participate in such an intensive research study). Data consist of naturalistic audiotaped family conversations collected over a period of eight months in three different adoptive families. The recorded data are supplemented with ethnographic interviews and some field notes, but the study itself cannot be considered ethnographic because I was not involved in extensive participant observation in these families or other means of data triangulation beyond the interviews (e.g., document analysis) (cf. Duff, 2008, p. 34).

As mentioned above, each family participating in this study had a different makeup in terms of parental structure (i.e. single vs. dual-parent), number of adopted children (from two to six), and age of arrival of adoptees and length of residence at the start of the study, among other differences. While this variation limits the generalizability of findings across the three families, it also provides a wide a sense of
range and variation for language use and learning in adoptive families. I discuss the advantages of such approach below.

According to Stake (2000) a "case" can be an individual, a unit of a larger institution (such as a classroom) or an institution itself (such as a school). The study of the case then involves investigating as many contexts and aspects as possible in order to identify patterns of behavior and the "boundaries" of the case (p. 436). The case study in general is defined by its use of multiple data collection methods in order to present a "holistic" picture of a particular learning environment and the participants' interaction in that environment. For this reason, the case study can utilize both quantitative and qualitative data and a variety of methods:

Case study is not a methodological choice but a choice of what is to be studied. By whatever methods, we choose to study the case. We could study it analytically or holistically, entirely by repeated measures or hermeneutically, organically or culturally, and by mixed methods – but we concentrate, at least for the time being, on the case (Stake, 2000, p. 435).

Case studies, however, are limited in their generalizability to larger segments of the population being studied (in this case school-age, Russian-speaking adoptees, or more generally second language-learning children). The benefit of the case study, therefore, is not its ability to tell us something about all adoptive families, but its ability to explain processes and interactions that might be further studied with larger populations of participants. Hymes (1974) stressed the importance of seeking
generalizations through analysis of the particulars and studying language behaviors in local contexts using microanalyses of individual cases (see also De Fina et al., 2006).

Case studies, if presented with thick description, might also be compared to one another. Lanza (2004) writes;

Research, however, is cumulative, and the increasing number of case studies of child language development provides a good base for comparing the findings of one study with that from other studies (p. 82).

A collective case study of several adoptive families, therefore, might yield valuable information about the range of practices and approaches utilized by adoptive families as well as the complex relationship of home, school, and other contexts that is revealed through variation in family practices and activities. The current study provides data from three cases, each with a different make up in terms of number of adopted children, age of children, and numbers as well as different approaches to Russian language use and maintenance and schooling. These differences can be seen as representative, however, of the variation that exists in the adoptive community.

There are two main criticisms of this approach: on the one hand, language socialization does not allow for generalizations because of the small number of participants and focus on relativity (Gregg, 2006; see Block, 2003 and Thorne, 2001 for response to this general critique in the SLA literature). On the other hand, early socialization studies have also been criticized for homogenizing variation in the interest of presenting a coherent picture of a culture (Bayley & Schecter, 2003; Garrett & Baquedano-Lopéz, 2002; Luykx, 2005). The families in Ochs’s (1988)
original Samoan study, for example, were not presented as contextually different but rather unified exemplars of Samoan society. In this study I present data from three very different internationally adoptive families who share only a few things in common (a) they can all be considered middle-class based on residency and occupations, and the parents are from European backgrounds; (b) they all consist of at least one adopted Russian-speaking child who was over the age of five years at the time of arrival; and (c) they all live in the same metropolitan region on the East coast of the United States.

In keeping with Stake’s (2000) argument that collective case studies should be treated separately, I resist comparisons of the three families as an analytic tool (though I do refer to the other families in the respective chapters as reminders of what we have seen before). Duff (2008), however, takes a slightly different view suggesting that “having more than one focal case can provide interesting contrasts or corroboration across cases” (p. 124) given that the cases are carefully selected. As I will discuss in Chapter 4 below, recruiting adoptive parents and selecting participants within the adoptive family community that met specific eligibility criteria was difficult due to the smaller numbers and greater internal inherent variability of adoptive families. The members of the three participating families are not easily compared because of the contextual differences in each family’s experiences. I therefore attempt to present the analyses of these three families’ data as “possibilities” of what can happen in internationally adoptive families, but not what does happen in all families or what all adoptive families do. In presenting the three very different
parenting styles, family make-ups, and language socialization phenomena, I hope to present a range of possibilities within which other adoptive families might fall; however, without subsequent research it is impossible to know what other possibilities exist (one notable omission in the three families considered here is the internationally adoptive family in which the first language of the children is maintained over time by parents and children in interaction).
Chapter 2: Background on Adoption

As mentioned in the introduction, adoption and adoptees have been studied from sociological and psychological perspectives, but the majority of studies dealing with language and international adoption in specific have focused on clinical issues of measuring and assessing adoptees’ language development rather than actual processes of language learning or identity construction. In this chapter I discuss the phenomenon of adoption in the United States with a focus on how a language socialization perspective can contribute to our understanding of how international adoptees learn and develop in the new home environment.

International adoption trends

From 1990 to 2004, the adoption of foreign-born children by U.S. citizens more than tripled from 7,093 international adoptions reported in 1990 to over 24,000 in 2004 (Office of Immigration Statistics, 2004). Researchers and authors interested in adoption issues often cite both domestic and foreign social and political factors to account for this trend. In the United States, overall increases in maternal age have caused parents to look for alternative ways to build families. In addition, fewer numbers of infants available for adoption and other social and cultural considerations have led some U.S. parents to seek adoptions from abroad. These processes have both been facilitated by and also contributed to a growing multiculturalism in the U.S. in the late 1990’s (Esposito & Biafora, 2007; Pertman, 2001).
World events such as the end of the Cold War and fall of the Soviet Union also contributed to the transnational flow of children as restrictions were loosened and U.S. parents also found a philanthropic purpose in adopting children in need from abroad (Melosh, 2002). Related to these phenomena, until 2005 China was the largest sender of children to the U.S. with Russia in second place. In the past five years, however, these numbers have changed as countries from the former Soviet Union and China have slowed some adoptions due to concerns about both the eventual outcomes for the children and other factors. In general, the years 2005 to 2008 have seen a slight decline in international adoptions overall, with 17,438 adopted children entering the U.S. in 2008 (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2009).

While these statistics also show that most international adoptees arrive in the U.S. as infants, one aspect of the international adoption trend has been an increase in the number of school-age (five years or older) international adoptees arriving in the U.S. each year. The phenomenon of adopting older or school-age children from abroad is one that is confined largely to Russia and other countries of the former Soviet Union (e.g., Ukraine, Kazakhstan, etc.). About 20% (1,016) of the total number of children adopted by U.S. parents from Russia in 2003 was over the age of five at the time of arrival, whereas only 1% (~100) of children from China were of comparable age.

Language development

Research involving international adoptees has typically focused on deficits, disorders, or other problems believed to be associated with institutionalization and
deprivation in childhood (Glennen, 2002). In terms of language and language development, most of the research has been conducted in the field of speech-language pathology. In this section I focus on the major findings from this literature and the theoretical underpinnings of such work, pointing out areas that could benefit from more ethnographic, contextualized studies of language learning and language use in adoptive families.

While there is extensive speculation about the detrimental effects of both the switch in languages and prolonged institutionalization for international adoptees (Gindis, 2005; Glennen, 2002; Federici, n.d.), very little empirical research exists regarding the language development of international adoptees, and almost no research in this area has been conducted with those adopted at school age. Speech-language pathologists took up these issues in an effort to understand how to treat international adoptees who were referred to their clinics by school officials (Glennen, 2002). Such research therefore had the main goal of determining whether young international adoptees (usually adopted under the age of three) could be assessed using monolingual assessment instruments.

Two studies, spaced five years apart, investigated the language development and school performance of a group of infants and toddlers adopted from Eastern Europe. Glennen and Masters (2002) surveyed at regular intervals (every 3-6 months) the parents of 130 infants and toddlers (36 months or younger) adopted from Eastern European from the time of adoption until the children reached age 36-40 months. This study concluded that internationally adopted infants and toddlers learning an
adopted first language mirror developmental growth patterns for non-adopted English-speaking children. For children adopted at younger ages, English first words and two-word phrases emerged at the expected ages. Furthermore, children in the study adopted at older ages (but still under three years) began speaking English immediately and made rapid catch-up gains in development soon after coming home (p. 432).

These conclusions coincide with those of Pollock and Price (2005) who found that children aged 15-33 months adopted from China rapidly caught up to monolingual English-speaking norms in phonology. Pollock and Price concluded that children who had been in their English-speaking homes for two years or more could be assessed using the same phonological inventories as monolingual toddlers and therefore might be considered first language learners of English. Snedeker, Geren, and Shafto (2007) investigated the language development of a group of 14 preschoolers (ages 3 and 4) adopted from Eastern Europe and also found that they met monolingual milestones on the same trajectory. These studies suggest that infants, toddlers and even preschool-age adoptees develop English skills in a manner similar to monolingual, non-adopted children who learn English as a mother tongue. However, Glennen and Bright (2005), in the follow up study to Glennen and Masters (2002), suggested that differences might emerge for children adopted at young ages when they started school because the need to “talk to learn” would uncover subtle delays or deficiencies in linguistic and possibly cognitive functioning.
Academic skills

Glennen and Bright (2005) followed 46 of the original participants adopted as infant/toddler (under 30 months) from Eastern Europe of the Glennen and Masters (2002) study. This study found a decrease over time in speech and language delays or disorders, developmental delay, and sensory integration disorder. However Glennen and Masters found an increase over time in ADD/ADHD, learning disabilities, poor vision, and visual processing disorder diagnoses. The most commonly received support service for this cohort was speech and language services (23.9%) compared to about 8-10% of children overall (AHSA, n.d.). Overall adoptees scored lower on inventories of pragmatic skills (standardized tests administered to the participants in the study) than monolingual norms, and the authors concluded that this could be attributed to subtle delays associated with institutionalization that become evident only in the school context. However, the study also found that the length of time in the orphanage for the 46 children was not significantly correlated with the delays noted in the results of the inventories, suggesting that other factors such as the family language environment or individual differences in language acquisition must play a role. Language socialization in the home environment, including parent-child interaction and access to literacy materials and training, therefore, could play a role in the outcomes of such quantitative measures.

One study that points to the important role that the family environment might play for the academic performance of international adoptees investigated the correlation between home literacy practices and children’s scores on a battery of
academic skills tests. Petrill, Deater-Deckard, Schatschneider and Davis (2005), in a study of 262 adopted children from a variety of backgrounds (84% internationally adopted, 6% from Eastern Europe) all of whom had been adopted under the age of three, found that the family environment, including number of books read by parents, educational attitudes and a number of other factors, had a significant influence on children's reading-related outcomes on a variety of standardized measures. By studying a diverse population of adopted children, Petrill et al. conclude that genetics do not play as great a role in literacy outcomes for children as environmental factors do. While the goal of this study was to determine the effects of nature vs. nurture on literacy skill development and compare results for adopted children to norms for biological children, the findings are also relevant to within-group comparisons of adoptive families and suggest that the literacy environment of individual families plays a role in academic outcomes for international adoptees. Although, further research would be needed to control for other effects such as length of institutionalization and prior schooling. Nonetheless this study, taken together with the findings from other studies, suggest that understanding adoptees’ language development and performance in school requires an understanding of the linguistic and educational environment of the child.

Bilingualism and “semilingualism”

As mentioned above, little research has been conducted on the language acquisition and academic performance of children adopted at older ages. Older, Russian-speaking adoptees represent a relatively small, but special group of bilingual
immigrant children in the U.S. who arrive with little or no prior exposure to the
English language, little prior schooling, and limited exposure to literacy skills (Fogle,
2006). Further, recent studies of international adoptees have found that these children
typically lose contact with speakers of their first languages because their parents do
not have the desire or necessary competence needed to support first language
maintenance for their adopted child. While few, if any studies, have investigated the
quantity or types of first language support provided to Russian adoptees after arrival,
several studies have indirectly reported on this topic. For instance, in a study of 130
children adopted from Eastern Europe before the age of 36 months, Glennen and
Masters (2002) found that only one adoptive parent, a first language (L1) speaker of
Russian, used that language above the level of "simple words and phrases" (p. 419).
Isurin (2000) further documented the language attrition process of a 9-year-old girl
adopted from Russia over the first year after her arrival in the U.S. and concluded that
the child experienced a process of first language "forgetting" that was associated with
related gains in second language acquisition. Nicoladis and Grabois (2002), in a
study of a one-year-old Chinese adoptee’s acquisition of English, also noted that the
child’s loss of Chinese and acquisition of English were “remarkably fast,” a finding
that the authors attribute to the already established social and communicative
processes of the child (p. 441).

This process of rapid loss of a first language and simultaneous acquisition of a
second language has been theorized by professionals and researchers working with
international adoptees to result in cognitive deficits for children adopted from abroad
These assumptions are loosely based on theoretical frameworks that suggest that below age-appropriate levels of competence in both of a bilingual child’s languages, along with lack of support (i.e. development of literacy and academic skills) in a bilingual child’s L1, can result in what has been characterized as “semilingualism” or cognitive delays (Cummins, 2001). Although these ideas provide some means of understanding why bilingual children from minority language backgrounds have been found to lag academically in comparison to children from majority language backgrounds in bilingual immersion programs (Cummins, 2001), these concepts have been criticized for being poorly defined and potentially damaging to language minority students (MacSwan, 2000; Valadez, MacSwan & Martínez, 2000).

For example, Valadez, MacSwan and Martínez (2000) studied a group of children labeled as “non proficient” in both of their languages (Spanish and English) to determine if quantitative differences did exist in language proficiency for these children compared to Spanish-English bilingual children who were considered proficient. This study found that no differences existed in linguistic competence (i.e. lexical and morphosyntactic proficiency), but differences did exist in the children’s reading and writing skills. Difference in exposure to literacy and development of reading and writing skills, therefore, might account for what has previously been characterized as language proficiency. The point to take away from this is that fears of language and learning disabilities or cognitive deficits based on the switch in languages that adoptees face are potentially misguided. Multiple factors play a role in
a child’s language development, literacy learning, and academic performance
(Hornberger, 2003), but we don’t have a clear picture of what those factors are for
older internationally adopted children. The second language learning and school
experiences of international adoptees might be different than those of other bilingual
populations, and contextual aspects such as inclusion in a language majority
household, exposure to literacy in the home environment and access to extra academic
support such as tutors and extra classes, could give adoptive children an extra edge in
getting ready for school. In short, we do not know how international adoptees to the
U.S., nearly all of whom become members of English-speaking families, adapt to
school in a second language. Further, some evidence suggests that expert opinions
promoting a “deficit” view of international adoptees’ cognitive abilities can influence
parents and the formation of kinship relations in the adoptive family (Stryker, 2004).

In short, we don’t know much about children who immigrate to the U.S. as
adoptees at school age and enter the U.S. school system as English language learners
in relation to other bilingual children who arrive with their biological families. The
assumption is often made that adoptees undergo a severe and rapid process of
subtractive bilingualism in which the first language is lost and a second language
acquired; however, little empirical evidence exists to document this process for older
children. In two of the case studies presented here, for example, the adoptive parents
spoke Russian with their children on a daily basis for at least six months after the
children’s arrival, and in the third family Russian was maintained to some extent
through supplementary classes. In addition, we don’t know how home socialization
plays a role in the transition and assimilation process for adoptees. On the one hand, the transition to the new culture and educational system could be easier for adoptees as they are potentially exposed to socialization at home that matches that of schooling, on the other hand this transition could be more difficult as they experience changes in both their external, public lives and their private home lives. In this study I look primarily at how language practices are negotiated between parents and children within the family and how these processes of collaboration and compromise provide support for second language learning adoptees.

Adoptive parents’ perspectives on language and learning
Examining adoptive parents’ reported strategies and goals for their internationally adopted children is one way to better understand how beliefs about language and language learning intersect with other ideologies (e.g., regarding adoption and adoptees in general). Adoptive parents have been noted to approach parenting in slightly different ways than biological parents. They have been found to be extremely proactive in comparison to their traditional counterparts. In a recent study of census data from 13,000 households with first-graders in the family, Hamilton, Cheng and Powell (2007) found that adoptive parents spend more money on their children and invest more time on such activities as reading to them, eating together and talking with them about their problems, even after controlling for parental income, education, and maternal age. In addition, adoptive parents have also been noted to seek professional services at earlier stages than biological parents,
resulting in higher rates of adoptees’ referrals for psychological and academic support (Warren, 1992; Miller et al., 2000).

Increased referral rates by cautious adoptive parents can lead to the perception that adoptees experience more psychological and academic difficulties than their non-adopted peers and might also play into a construction of the adoptee as somehow “damaged” or “at risk” (Melosh, 2002). Miller et al. (2000) analyzed data from over 20,000 middle school students who participated in the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. This study found that adoption status alone was a greater predictor of referral for psychological counseling than adolescents’ self-reported problems (along with other factors such as race, parental education, and health insurance coverage). These findings confirmed previous studies that found a lower threshold for referral in adoptive parents vs. traditional parents (Warren, 1992). 

Brodzinsky (1993) further concluded that research on adoptees’ psychological and academic problems needs to consider the problem more holistically, considering not only the pre-placement history of the child (i.e. time in foster care or institution and early trauma), but also the “societal, interpersonal, and familial factors in children’s adoption adjustment” that are tied to the child’s identity (p. 162). Indeed, a more context-sensitive approach that acknowledges the social construction of disabilities has been argued for all children labeled “at risk” or identified with learning disabilities (Mehan, Hertweck, & Meihls, 1986).

In Chapter 1 above, I outlined current thinking on sociological and anthropological approaches to adoption research and pointed to a need for more
extensive theorizing of adoptive identity construction through analysis of adoptees in family interactions. Such a focus can inform prior research on international adoptees’ language development and learning by providing data that document interactional processes in the home environment and showing what international adoptees can do in interaction with their parents – how they learn and how contextual factors such as interactional strategies and exposure to literacy play a role.
Chapter 3: Methods

The current study employs a longitudinal design based on the ethnographic approach of the language socialization paradigm in which audiotapes of everyday interactions and interviews comprise the main data set. This design allows for a contextualized examination of the interactional data and emic perspectives on the family practices as parents and other family members discuss their views on the ongoing processes. In this chapter I will discuss the methods for recruitment, the demographics of all the participants, and the process of data collection for the study. Specific details regarding aspects of each family’s makeup and the methods for coding and analyzing the interactional data for each family will be presented in the respective analysis chapters because, as noted in Chapter 2, the contextual differences in each family led to the analysis of a different language practice in each family’s discourse (i.e. narrative talk about the day in Family One, language-related episodes in Family Two, and code-switching in Family Three).

Recruitment and the evolution of the study

Recruitment notices for this study were sent to (a) an online listserv of a popular grass roots family support group for families who have adopted or are planning to adopt from Russia, Ukraine, and other countries of the former Soviet Union; (b) local adoption agencies specializing in international adoptions; (c) a Saturday Russian school that offered programs for Russian adoptees, and (c) local pediatricians and therapists known to work with international adoptees. A
representative of the online support group distributed notices on the listserv on the researcher’s behalf in order to avoid controversy over outside solicitations. In addition, I held several information sessions on raising bilingual children for adoptive and bilingual parents at the Russian Saturday school in 2004-2005. I also presented preliminary findings of this research to therapists at a monthly case meeting on international adoptions at a pediatric medical center through which I made some contacts, but my primary recruitment source was the email listserv.

Families were eligible for the study if both parents were native English speakers and at least one child over the age of five had been adopted from Russia or Russian-speaking regions (e.g., Ukraine or Kazakhstan). One parent in each of the first two families (Families One and Two) responded to a notice posted on the listserv described above to participate in an interview regarding language learning and international adoptees (Fogle, 2006). At the end of the interview, these two families agreed to participate in further research and were contacted later in the year to begin the in-home audio recordings. Out of eleven families who participated in interviews, these two were selected for in-home recording because in both families the fathers were the primary caregivers, the children were close in age, the families were made up of the same number of children (i.e. two adoptees), the parents had no prior children, and the four children had arrived within the calendar year about three months apart from one another in each family. In short, I chose the two families who were closest matched for age of the children, age of arrival and length of residence, and family makeup. However, I found making comparisons in the language
development of these four children difficult because of the differences in educational choices (the children in Family One attended a public charter school with ESL classes while the older child in Family Two was home-schooled) and the perspectives and practices of the parents (for more discussion see Fogle, 2008). At the end of data collection in these two families, I then proposed to conduct a follow-up study with participating families in which the makeup of the family and the children themselves were more closely matched for age, arrival time, and other factors in order to closely investigate the acquisition of English question forms in the school context and at home. I also proposed to compare the acquisition processes of international adoptees with those of Russian bilingual children who immigrated with their biological parents to better understand how home socialization, and specifically the maintenance of the first language Russian, played a role in acquisition processes.

Unfortunately, recruiting participants for this more controlled study of language acquisition and language socialization was a difficult task. The recruitment criteria required that families begin data collection within the first month after the children’s arrival. The recruitment period fell at a time when adoptions from Russia were beginning to slow, and while several families expressed interest in the study only one family agreed to the weekly family recordings. I think this was for several reasons – the intimate nature of recording one’s own mealtimes, the perceived difficulties in the early period after arrival, and the fact that I was a stranger. I felt at the time that if I had started with interviews, it would have been easier to recruit
parents for further participation because they would have met me face-to-face and known what types of questions I was interested in.

The Goellers, or Family Three, was the only family who agreed to meet with me and conduct the data collection after six months of looking for the carefully matched families I had planned on recruiting. It turned out that Melanie and Paul had met me in 2004 when I had given a talk to parents at the center that held Saturday language and mathematics courses in Russian. They told me that they remembered me because I had originally told them that Russian lessons once a week would not be enough for their first two children (Inna and T.K.) to maintain Russian. This had turned out to be case. This initial personal contact, I believe, played an important role in their decision to participate in the data collection after their fifth and sixth children arrived. Melanie was also familiar with some of the research conducted with younger adoptees in language learning and was interested in contributing to research done with older adoptees. Finally, I think Melanie also had an interest in providing as much support as possible (and Russian-speaking support) for the teenage girls, and I had included in the announcement that I would meet with the children once a week to talk about their adjustment and schooling. It was these weekly meetings that seemed the most important to Melanie as she was consistent in scheduling and being home for those events even though she did not keep to a regular recording schedule at mealtime despite my reminders (although this also might have been due to other family dynamics and the intrusion of a recorder at the dinner table).
Finding matched families with children with similar histories and backgrounds is one of the challenges of adoption research. As mentioned in Chapter 2 above, adoptees face disruption and change that most children do not face early in life, and these situations are often blamed for future deficiencies or problems. While prior studies have sought to generalize the experience of being an “adoptee” or “post-institutionalized” as discussed in Chapter 3, there is much variability in early experiences that may not even be known to adoptive parents (several of the children in this study for example had lived with their parents or other family members at different times in their lives and were not raised exclusively in an orphanage).

Because of these facts, I decided to focus on the post-placement lives of the children by analyzing strategies and practices that I felt were linked to the local context and situation and minimize my interest in the children’s prior histories as well as the parents’ motivations for adopting (other than what the participants shared and constructed in conversation with each other and in interviews) because (a) while the parents of course had information about the children’s backgrounds, I did not feel confident as a researcher basing my analyses on this knowledge and (b) as a researcher interested in language learning and bilingualism who was collecting fairly private data over an extended period of time, I did not feel comfortable directly asking about motives for adoption or the children’s backgrounds because I did not want to perpetuate stereotypes or identities of the parents or children that might influence their practices. For the most part, in interacting with the parents and children I stuck to understanding the recent interactions or problems from their perspective without
imposing the supposed importance of the children’s prior lives or the parents’
motivations onto the data.

The two teenage girls in Family Three who reintroduced Russian to their
adoptive family were my primary inspiration for looking more carefully at how
children influence their parents and what implications such processes have for
understandings of language socialization. What was a fairly transparent process in
The Goeller’s interactions (i.e. parents’ and other family members’ use of Russian to
accommodate to the new arrivals) was obscured by the fact that parents and children
shared a same language of interaction in the other two families. However, this mutual
language choice did not mean that the children did not influence and affect their
parents’ interactional patterns, as I will show below. In short, while Family Three did
not fit into my intended research design, their participation in the project allowed for a
new perspective on language socialization that I had not previously imagined.

Participants: Three families

Family One

Family One, The Sondermans, was comprised of a single father and two boys,
Dima and Sasha, ages nine and eight respectively at the start of the study. The family
lived in an urban condominium-style town home within the borders of the city. John
was self-employed as a psychotherapist and held two Master’s degrees. John was the
oldest parent and the only single parent participating in the study. I met with John
approximately one month after the boys had arrived. At that time John reported using
only Russian with the boys whom he believed were bilingual in Ukrainian and
Russian. In the initial interview, John had indicated that he made the decision to use Russian to help the boys deal emotionally with the transition to the new family. He also stated positive attitudes toward having Ukrainian kids as opposed to American kids; he seemed interested in the cultural differences and the processes involved in forming a transnationally adoptive family. As the study progressed, I also found that John had kept in touch with the boys’ grandmother with whom they had lived before entering the orphanage as they talked about writing or calling her on occasion in the mealtime recordings. Although John was a fluent speaker of Russian, when I returned 13 months later to conduct the audio recordings, he reported that the whole family had switched to English as the primary means of communication. Dima was reported to have completed one year of schooling in Ukraine and Sasha had no prior schooling or exposure to literacy. However, John had made a concerted effort to introduce the boys to English literacy from their first meeting by bringing handheld Leapster® toys (multimedia learning systems) to Ukraine that the boys practiced on.

*Family Two*

Family Two, the Jackson-Wessels, was a dual-parent home with two children, a boy, Arkadiy, and girl, Anna (ages seven and four respectively), who were biological siblings. Both parents in Family Two held law degrees; however, Kevin had chosen to be a stay-at-home-dad and homeschool teacher. The mother, Meredith, worked as a government attorney. The family resided in a single family home in the suburbs of a major metropolitan area. Neither Arkadiy nor Anna had previous schooling or much exposure to literacy at the time of arrival, according to Kevin. At
the beginning of the audiotaping, Arkadiy was homeschooled by his father and Anna stayed attended a part-time preschool. I first met with Kevin approximately four months after the children’s arrival and began audiotaping five months after that first interview. Kevin reported that he and his wife had learned only a few words and basic commands in Russian, such as “brush your teeth,” but could not converse with the children in the language. In the first interview, Kevin noted that inability to communicate through a common language had been a major source of stress for his wife and even his in-laws in the initial period after the children’s arrival because the children would address the adults in Russian despite their not understanding. At the initiation of the data collection, the children spoke English between themselves and Russian was not used in the home environment (though Arkadiy still had some contact with Russian at the Saturday school).

*Family Three*

Family Three, the Goellers, was also a dual-parent home, but consisted of four adopted siblings prior to the adoption of the two focal children (Lesya and Lena) for this study. The parents in Family Three, Melanie and Paul, both worked full time, with Melanie taking on primary caregiving responsibilities for the children around her work hours. When I started the study, Melanie was on family leave from her full time job as a Senior Compensation Analyst (in Human Resources for a government office). Paul worked in information technology as an identity architect. There were six adopted children in the family total, three sets of two siblings that were adopted in waves from 2004-2007. Melanie and Paul had taken a Berlitz course in Russian prior
to the arrival of their first children, had basic communication skills in the language, and reported using Russian with their children as well as on their trips to Russia. Melanie also often cooked Russian foods and they as well as the children had kept in contact with the orphanages from which the children had been adopted.

In many ways, the Goellers incorporated the children’s Russian heritage and their own interest in Russian into their daily lives while maintaining the Jewish traditions of Paul’s side of the family (through Hebrew school), and to a lesser extent the French Canadian background of Melanie (the boys playing hockey, for example, was noted to be related to Melanie’s background). The children in Family Three participated in many extracurricular activities including Tae Kwon Do, gymnastics, horseback riding, hockey, Hebrew school, and Saturday Russian school (for the first arrivals, but not Lesya and Lena). Such activities were an important part of life for these children and much of dinnertime was spent planning for activities to take place later that evening or week. In addition, Melanie and Paul scrupulously kept up with each child’s responsibilities in terms of chores, and chore charts with a list of duties for each child according to the day of the week as well as a large family calendar were posted to the kitchen walls along with examples of Cyrillic, Roman, and Hebrew alphabets and other school-related materials. Dinnertime conversations usually ended with a discussion of what chores needed to be done or what activity the children were supposed to attend next.

Lesya and Lena, the newest arrivals in Family Three, are the oldest adoptees to participate in the study. Both had attended some high school in Russia and both
had some prior exposure to English. Lena had been placed in technical school to learn to be a cook in a restaurant. Her English courses were geared toward preparing her for that job. Lesya was still in general high school courses and had not been tracked in a vocational program; however, she indicated that her English classes were not as good as Lena’s prior to arrival. All six children in the family were native speakers of Russian. Demographic information for children can be found in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Child demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Child</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Age of Arrival</th>
<th>Date of Arrival</th>
<th>DOB</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>First Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Dima</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9/25/04</td>
<td>11/30/95</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Russian/Ukrainian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sasha</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9/25/04</td>
<td>9/20/97</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Russian/Ukrainian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Arkadiy</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12/20/04</td>
<td>2/18/99</td>
<td>Homeschool Russian</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12/20/04</td>
<td>7/31/01</td>
<td>Nursery school Russian</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Lena</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6/4/07</td>
<td>8/13/90</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Russian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lesya</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6/4/07</td>
<td>4/23/92</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Russian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Valentina (Valya)</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Russian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inna</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Russian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>David</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Russian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tolya (T.K.)</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Russian</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Demographic information about the parents is in Table 3.2.
Data collection

Data collection for all three families consisted of in-home audio recordings and regular visits by the researcher for interviews. Because the children in Families One and Two had been in the U.S. for approximately one year and no great changes in language choice or competence were expected, a monthly data collection schedule was implemented in which parents were asked to record at least two mealtimes and two literacy events during one week of each month following methods used by previous researchers, including, for example, Tomasello and Stahl (2004). Lesya and Lena, the new arrivals in Family Three, were expected to show development in English at a faster rate. Family Three, therefore, was asked to collect the same types of data on a weekly basis in order to capture changes in language competence and language choice from the first week. Table 3.3 presents the amounts and types of data collected.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Other languages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>John</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>MA (2)</td>
<td>Psychtherapist</td>
<td>French, Russian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Kevin</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>JD</td>
<td>Stay-at-home Father</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meredith</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>JD</td>
<td>Staff Attorney</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Melanie</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>1 year of college</td>
<td>Senior compensation analyst</td>
<td>French, Russian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>BS</td>
<td>Identity architect</td>
<td>Russian</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is evident that each family had a preference for the type of recording they
completed, a fact that will be considered in the analysis of the data.

In addition to recording their home interactions, the parents in all three
families and the oldest children in Family Three participated in regular interviews.
These interviews lasted from about ten minutes to up to 45 minutes and took place in
participants' homes. I used a mixed method interview format during these sessions.
In general, interviews were open-ended and ethnographic in nature in the sense that
they asked parents and children to reflect on the family communication and changes
or developments that they noticed from month to month or week to week. Topics
usually ranged from perceptions or concerns about school performance,
communication strategies or changes in family dynamics, language mistakes and
corrections strategies used by the parents, and reflections on the children's behaviors
and alignment with peer groups.
In addition to asking general questions about how things were going or what changes the parents/children had noticed, I also used a modified version of stimulated recall methodology (a popular method used in second language acquisition research [Gass & Mackey, 2000]) to elicit feedback on clips from the family recordings. Parents and the children Lesya and Lena listened to an approximately 30 second clip of one of the family recordings, usually that had taken place in the month or week prior to the interview. I introduced the clip by asking family members to listen and then tell me what they heard, thus eliciting talk about the speech event. After providing a description of the clip, I usually asked some follow-up questions such as “Do you know why you said that?” or “Can you talk a little bit more about that strategy?” I also used these interviews to gain clarification on unintelligible speech (especially in Family Two) and contextual details (e.g., Where were you sitting?).

Transcription
As noted by Ochs (1979), the transcript produced from audio recordings becomes the data, and the method selected for transcription carries with it presuppositions about the nature of interaction and, more specifically, roles between adult and child interlocutors. The study of conversational routines entails attention to details of turn taking that can account for the initiation and participation in routines in interaction. A transcription system that documented interactional features such as overlaps, latches, and continuations of a speaker’s turn across interruptions or other turns, therefore, was desirable in order to document who initiated certain types of talk and how these initiations are sustained or rejected by other speakers. To cover these
concerns, therefore, transcription conventions from Tannen et al. (2007) were used to represent the family interactions (Appendix); although, a few of the transcripts were originally transcribed in Codes for the Human Analysis of Transcripts (CHAT) (MacWhinney, 2000), which will be discussed in the relevant chapters below. The methods for coding and analyzing the narrative, metalanguage, and code mixing data will be presented in the individual chapters below.
Chapter 4: When a routine falls apart: Narrative talk about the day in Family One

Family One, the Sondermans, stands out among U.S. families as well as the adoptive families participating in this study in two main ways. First, it is a family headed by a single father. In 2006, 9% of all households in the United States were single-parent families, and only one fifth of those had single fathers (U.S. Census Bureau News, 2007). Second, although Dima and Sasha had only been in the states for a little over a year, their language production was easily passable to casual interlocutors for native speakers of English. This is remarkable due to the fact that one of the only prior longitudinal studies of international adoptees’ second language acquisition found that the two brothers adopted from Vietnam in that study had not acquired past tense morphology even after a year in their new homes (Sato, 1990).

The analytical focus for the other two families (Families Two and Three) involved in this study will be on aspects of language use that have some association with the fact that the internationally adoptive family is a language contact environment. For example, metalinguistic discourse, which I study in Family Two’s data, has been found to occur at higher rates in bilingual families (Blum-Kulka, 1997; De Geer, Tulviste, Mizera, & Tryggvason, 2002) and code-switching, which I study in Family Three’s data, is by definition a bilingual phenomenon. However, in Family One I focus on narrative analysis, and more specifically the activity of telling about the day, which has been predominately studied in dual-parent, monolingual, middle-
class, European American households (Ochs & Taylor, 1992; Ochs & Taylor, 1995; Ochs, Taylor, Rudolph, & Smith, 1992; Tannen, 2007). This focus emerged from the different contextual factors such as Dima and Sasha’s language proficiency, John’s concerns and goals as a single father, and, more importantly, the contrast that telling about the day in this family provided to accounts of such practices in other families.

The Sondermans engaged in a routine practice at dinnertime in which each family member was required to tell one bad thing and one good thing about their day. This narrative routine, which John learned about in a magazine article, was premeditated and had specific rules for interaction. In the 22 dinnertime recordings collected in Family One, this routine occurred 19 times. There were only three dinnertimes over eight months where the family did not at least initiate the routine. John, the father, was the most frequent initiator of this routine, and the children’s resistance to his elicitation of bad things and good things were equally as regular in the data as the routine’s occurrence. In these data either Dima or Sasha respond with a “nothing” response or other avoidance strategy to a narrative elicitation “What was your bad thing?” in almost every occurrence of the routine. In this chapter I examine the children’s resistance to John’s initiations of the routine and the changes in the father’s elicitation strategies as well as the decreased regularity of initiation of the routine in the mealtime conversations. In conclusion, I examine other types of narratives that take the place of the initiation of the routine in the later transcripts and suggest that while the routine itself played a role in negotiating and establishing power relations in the family, other types of spontaneous narratives (such as talk
about the distant past or future) afforded the family an opportunity to share experiences across time and build a family identity on higher timescales that transcended the day-to-day.

**Literature Review**

Narrative is considered to be a central activity associated with identity construction and socialization. In this section I review language socialization research on family narrative practices and discuss different approaches to the study of narrative. Finally, I distinguish between two types of narratives: routine talk about the day and prototypical stories.

**Narrative socialization in family interaction**

One robust area of language socialization research is the study of narrative socialization, or how children or other novices learn both the structure of narratives and important cultural content conveyed through narrative activities. According to Ochs and Capps (2001), narrative socialization can encompass, “the socialization or acquisition of particular narrative structures as well as the instillation of valued ways of thinking, feeling, and acting” (p. 64). Garret and Baquedano-López view narrative as “a primordial tool of socialization” (p. 353), and Ochs and Capps (2001) point to conversational narratives in particular as being specifically important “to imbue life events with a temporal and logical order, to demystify them and establish coherence across past, present, and as yet unrealized experience” (p. 2). In this view, narrative productions in family interactions take on a role as a primary site of making meaning about daily events.
Narrative as process vs. product

Interest in narrative activities as sites of socialization, along with other developments in narrative analysis such as the inclusion of social constructionist views of identity (De Fina, 2003b), have led to greater consideration of narrative as a process rather than product. Narrative practices, according to De Fina, “both reflect[s] social beliefs and relationships and contribute[s] to negotiate and modify them” (p. 369). Thus constructing stories in interaction provides interlocutors, and more specifically for the purposes of this study, parents and children an arena to construct mutually shared values and knowledge as well as participant identities.

Researchers working with narrative productions in dyadic or multiparty interactions such as the family environment have suggested that a monologic analysis of the narrative genre is not adequate for understanding collaboratively produced narratives (Falk, 1979; Ochs & Capps, 2001). Further, the monologic productions of narrative cannot account for the process of socialization into narrative practices. Ochs and Capps offer a model of the conversational narrative in which four interactional moves: questions, clarifications, challenges, and speculations correspond to the four primary elements of narrative structure: description, chronology, evaluation, and explanation (p. 19) (Figure 4.1).
By coupling the analysis of narrative in interaction and narrative elements, this model has the potential for examining the narrative as both activity and text. In comparison to Labov and Waletsky’s (1967) original schema for the narrative, which characterized narratives as a number of set elements, Ochs and Capps (2001) argue that conversational narratives fall on a continuum of five dimensions: tellership (one vs. multiple), tellability (high to low), embeddedness (detached to embedded), linearity (closed temporal and clausal order to open), and moral stance (certain, constant to open, fluid) (Figure 4.2).

---

**Figure 4.1 Discourse components of conversational narrative**

**Figure 4.2 Narrative dimensions and possibilities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Possibilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tellership</td>
<td>One active teller</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Multiple active co-tellers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tellability</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embeddedness</td>
<td>Detached</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Embedded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Closed temporal and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>causal order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linearity</td>
<td>Certain, constant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Open temporal and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>causal order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral stance</td>
<td>Certain, constant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Uncertain fluid</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ochs & Capps (2001), p. 20
Other researchers also have acknowledged the importance of considering multiple possibilities for narratives as co-constructed and collaborative. Georgakopoulou (2007), for example, identified the following three aspects of narrative: temporality, disruption (complicating action), and consciousness (evaluation), which allowed for the inclusion of so-called “small stories” in narrative analysis. Ochs and Capps’ (2001) schema is particularly important to language socialization research because of its view of narrative productions in interaction as a site of problem solving where interlocutors negotiate meanings and moral stances (Ochs et al., 1992). These negotiations allow children opportunities to learn about what to expect from life events (especially in younger years) and serve to construct world views, moral stances, and family histories as well as engage in cognitive problem-solving activities associated with academic discourses (Ochs et al., 1992).

**Narrative forms**

In addition to seeing narratives as constructed in interaction, recent approaches to narrative analysis have begun to point to the multiple forms that can be included within the genre. De Fina (2003b), for example, points to the following possible types of narratives: elicited accounts, court narratives, autobiographies, and historical chronicles among others (p. 14). Other authors have investigated reports (Ochs and Taylor, 1992), small stories (Georgakoupoulou, 2007), life stories (Schiffrin, 2001), and many other forms. In this chapter I will focus on two types of narratives that are found in Family One’s data. The first are narratives told as part of an interactional routine or game designed to encourage the children to share about their day. The
second are more spontaneous narratives, initiated by the children that do not have the same premeditated rules as the routine. I argue that these two types of narratives constitute different activities in the family interactions and have different outcomes for both the children and their father John.

**Prototypical stories**

Most definitions of prototypical stories are based on Labov and Waletsky’s (1967) structural analysis of the narrative form that delineated a number of formal components as discussed above. Following Labov and Waletsky and analysts of narrative from other fields such as literary theory, most researchers point to temporal sequence as a key element to the narrative form (e.g., De Fina, 2003b; Georgakopoulou, 2007; Ochs and Capps, 2001). In addition, prototypical stories like the ones studied by Labov include a number of other elements. Specifically, according to De Fina, prototypical stories “tell past events, revolve around unexpected episodes, ruptures or disturbances of normal states of affairs or social rules and convey a specific message and interpretation about those events and/or the characters involved in them” (p. 14).

In Ochs and Taylor’s data of family mealtime narratives, stories are defined as having a problem-solving orientation while reports are narratives that do not involve problem solving. De Fina’s (2003b) chronicles differ from prototypical stories in the sense that they often do not have one evaluative point, and Georgakopoulou (2007) small stories do not include background information such as setting or even complicating events because the small stories are based on shared prior knowledge.
In the analysis below I will draw a distinction between the stories that are produces as part of the bad thing/good thing routine and more spontaneous narratives that take different forms and are more open in the sense that they have lower tellability, more open temporal and causal order, and more fluid moral stances on the range of possibilities proposed by Ochs and Capps (2001).

*Routine talk about the day*

Another type of narrative, typically researched in language socialization, that does not always take the form of the prototypical story is the more routine narrative activity of talk about the day that has been noted to be a common part of middle class mealtime practices (for discussions see Ochs and Capps, 2001). Prior research has noted the prevalence of talk about the day in family mealtime conversations (Blum Kulka, 1997; Ochs & Taylor, 1995). Elicitations of such talk from children play a role in their socialization of what to expect from everyday life and how to narrate unexpected events. Talk about the day narratives also can play a role in setting up power relations in family interactions as Ochs and Taylor show how mothers’ introductions of children’s stories to fathers serves to construct a “father knows best” dynamic in middle-class family interaction. Tannen (2007), however, suggests that such displays of power are at the same time displays of solidarity and empathy by mothers toward the other family members as such elicitations of child narratives also serve as a connection maneuver through which family members are brought together through shared experiences. In this chapter I examine how the single father’s elicitations of talk about the day from the two children are met with resistance to the
storytelling activity and how this resistance at once serves to break down the routine at the same time it serves to open up space for new, more collaborative, discourse activities.

There is plenty of research on family dinnertime narratives to suggest that families do not need to institute explicit routines to encourage family storytelling – these are already prompted regularly by family members (Ochs & Capps, 2001). However, currents in the popular press (e.g., U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2008) as well as recent academic reports point to fears of -- as well as evidence supporting -- a decline in the amount of rich interactions family members have in their times with each other, often attributed to the phenomenon of the dual-income family. Heath (2007) for example, notes that the data presented in two major studies of family interaction (led by Deborah Tannen and Marjorie Harness Goodwin and presented in a recent issue of Text and Talk [2006]) show very little of the narrative discourse known to be facilitative of academic competencies. Other studies have shown that U.S. families have decreased in the frequency of family dinners (Larson, Branscomb, & Wiley, 2006), and socialization research has even moved away from the mealtime activity to find other sites of interaction where parents and children are in regular contact. Adler and Adler (1984) for example focus on carpool to and from school as an important site of socialization.

Although most studies of narrative in family interactions have focused on parent elicitations of children’s narratives, these elicitations are not necessarily facilitative of children’s productions. Ochs and Capps (2001) report findings that
suggest that some children’s spontaneous narratives are more creative than those
elicited by parents. Further, children are known to resist parents’ elicitations precisely
because such moves place the child in a position of being evaluated by other family
members (Ochs & Capps, 2001). However, resistance to narrative elicitations have
been reported as a cursory phenomenon to the larger picture of how children are
apprenticed into narrative practices. The effect that such resistance has on parents’
elicitations of narratives has not, to my knowledge, been studied in detail. As stated
above, resistance to narrative elicitations, and specifically talk about the day, in
Family One is almost as commonplace as the parental elicitations themselves.

In this chapter I investigate school-age children’s role in narrative
socialization in the middle class adoptive family. I examine two main ways that
children affect storytelling in the family sphere. On the one hand, I find that
children’s resistance to narrative elicitations can lead to the changing of
conversational routines. At the same time, such break down of premeditated talk
about the day routines is replaced by children’s initiations of their own narratives
which typically take the form of narratives that hold personal meaning for the children
them and are not constrained by formal rules (i.e. to maintain the role of storyteller or
to have one evaluative point). In sum, I argue for a consideration of these types of
talk: stories and conversational narrative routines to be considered as different types
of family socialization activities that lead to different outcomes for parents and
children.
Methods

Data collection
The Sondermans participated in the study for eight months and returned six months of data (due to initial problems with the recorder and the researcher’s and family vacation schedules). They returned the most recordings of all the participating families, perhaps related to John’s professional and educational background in Psychology. All of the mealtime recordings were collected at dinner in the evening, and all of the literacy events (including homework sessions and reading from magazines, books, flyers from school, etc.) took place at the dinner table immediately after the meal. Table 4.1 shows the recordings returned by Family One.
Three recording sessions involved activities other than dinner. One recording was made in the car on the way home from school (B) and two were of activities at the dinner table, but no meal was served or eaten (the family was planning a trip to Six Flags and playing a card game). Sasha and John were present at all recordings; however, Dima was not present for one dinnertime because he was away at his grandparents. Although Family One was able to return four mealtime recordings usually collected within a week and a half period each month, at the end of the study John indicated that this schedule was challenging because the family did not often eat...
dinner together during the week (the boys often ate at a friend’s house when John was working in the evenings).

**Coding for narrative routines and stories**

The first round of coding for this chapter involved identifying the start and end of the bad thing/good thing routine and emic coding of the types of elicitations, responses, and narratives that occurred within its boundaries (Table 4.2). The bad thing/good thing routine was considered to be bounded by the first elicitation of or mention of a “bad thing” (usually issued by John) at the beginning and by a topic change following the last participants’ response to the final elicitation for a bad or good thing occurring in that transcript, depending on how many elicitations were issued. For example, if all family members told their bad things, but only one elicitation and response for a good thing occurred, then the analysis of the routine covered bad things from all three participants and good thing from one participant. Excerpts for analysis were selected from five turns above the first elicitation for a bad thing and five turns below the end of the last bad thing, good thing, or related “spinoff” topic. The codes developed for the moves in the bad thing/good thing routine can be found in Table 4.2.
Table 4.2: Coding for elicitions and responses in bad thing/good thing routine

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of prompt or response</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initiating elicitation</td>
<td>First elicitation for each bad thing/good thing (up to six total in one transcript)</td>
<td><em>What was your bad/good thing?</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Something bad/good?</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>How 'bout you?</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeated elicitation</td>
<td>Second and subsequent elicitation for bad/good thing</td>
<td><em>Did you say your bad thing?</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self elicitation</td>
<td>Speaker nominates self for bad thing/good thing</td>
<td><em>My bad thing.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Something good for me?</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoidance response - deferral</td>
<td>Speaker nominates other instead of taking turn in routine.</td>
<td><em>You first.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoidance response - &quot;nothing&quot;</td>
<td>Speaker responds to prompt with &quot;nothing&quot;</td>
<td><em>Nothin'.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>I don't know.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other topic nomination (prompt)</td>
<td>Other speaker nominates a bad/good thing for person prompted.</td>
<td><em>What about when you...</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correction</td>
<td>Correction from other speaker regarding rules of bad thing/good thing routine.</td>
<td><em>BAD thing (not good thing).</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>I already said mine.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>It's his turn.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative</td>
<td>Response to prompt that took the form of story, report, or small story</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarifications/Confirmations</td>
<td>Questions aimed at eliciting further information from speaker.</td>
<td><em>You what?</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>You did?</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrelated topic</td>
<td>Intervening talk within boundaries of bad thing/good thing routine that is not related to bad thing/good thing topics</td>
<td>Talk about food, behavior at the table, or other topics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Recordings that did not include the bad thing/good thing routine were not analyzed for this study, as will be discussed below. Finally, after a preliminary analysis of the routine itself, talk that occurred before the start of the bad thing/good thing routine (i.e. the first elicitation) for transcripts K-Y was coded for type of discourse (e.g., metalinguistic, language play, negotiation over food, narrative, etc.) and speaker who initiated the talk.
Narratives

In keeping with Ochs and Capps’ (2001) sketch of the interactional narrative discussed above (Figure 4.1), narratives were considered to be either monologic or multi-party constructions of a past, present or future event which included temporality, a problem or disruption, and evaluation (see also Georgakopoulou, 2007). Present time narratives included narrations usually of language play (i.e., announcing a football game with a tomato as a ball, “He runs with the ball… and he scores!”), while future narrative included planning for imagined and real events (hosting a brunch or a child imagining getting caught spying). Narratives in these data included stories, reports and small stories. In data for the current study, small stories took the form of one-line narratives where the elicitation of the bad thing or good thing presupposed the orientation (i.e. that day) and evaluations (bad or good). For example, “We had pizza two times” was coded as a narrative in response to the elicitation for a good thing (because time and location, at lunch at school) and evaluation (it was good) were implicit.

Findings

Background of bad thing/good thing

In interviews, John reported that he originally read about this conversational game in an article in Parade Magazine sometime after he brought the boys home in September of 2004. When questioned, he recalled that perhaps it had been something that they had begun to do when the family was still speaking Russian at home. A few database searches led to the article entitled, “A game that gets parents and kids
talking,” written by Bruce Feiler, a popular writer who is best known for his writings on Judaism and religion in America. The article was actually published August 15, 2004, around the same date that Sasha and Dima came to the States and started school. Feiler, who is not a psychologist or parenting expert, refers to the routine as a “game” that he links to his own childhood mealtime practices. Feiler’s rationale for recommending the bad thing/good thing game is based on a perceived need for family members to learn to talk about the good and the bad and to listen without passing judgment. The “rules” of the game outlined by Feiler (2004) are as follows:

1. Designate a moderator. This should be a rotating role, and each member of the family should get a turn at it. The moderator asks each person at the table, “What happened bad to you today?”
2. Review the bad stuff first.
3. Everybody gets a chance to speak, no matter how young.
4. Respect each answer. You can react to another person’s reply, but you can’t put it down.
5. End with the good. In Round Two, the moderator asks each person, “What happened good to you today?” Everyone gets a chance to reply.

(p. 1)

In conclusion, Feiler states that the benefit of this game for family members is the ability to develop listening skills and deal with difficult conversations in a “safe” environment:
The lesson of ‘Bad & Good,’ I believe, is not just that Mommy and Daddy have problems too. It’s that self-awareness begins with articulating the building blocks of what makes us happy and sad. Difficult conversations can be had with people of all ages, often with conflicting points of view. And the key to living in harmony with others is finding time to listen to their hopes and fears – and learning not to knock them (Feiler, 2004, p. 2).

In an interview where John explains his goals in instituting this routine, he makes similar comments about the value of talking about bad things/good things:

It [bad thing/good thing] was from an article about families uh having a family that actually speaks to each other instead of just goes past each other all the time, … it's to actually take a moment to let people in on what your experience has been. And we - we start with the bad thing first so we can end with a good thing, and it also let's people uhm, let's people know that uh we assume there's going to be bad stuff and that it's ok to talk about it. And that conversations are open to both possibilities (January, 2006).

*The routineness of the routine*

Interactional routines, according to Peters and Boggs (1986) are, “a sequence of exchanges in which one speaker’s utterance, accompanied by appropriate nonverbal behavior, calls forth one of a limited set of responses by one or more other participants” (p. 81). Studies in language socialization have shown the importance of conversational routines to early language learning as the child learns the parts of the
routine and eventually executes the routine independent of parental assistance (Demuth, 1986; Schieffelin, 1990). Family One’s participation in the bad thing/good thing game could be considered to be a routine in the simplest sense of the term simply by its pervasiveness across transcripts – the game is initiated in 19 out of 22 total mealtime transcripts (Table 4.3). However, there are other clues to the game’s status as an interactional routine which “calls forth a set of responses” by the participants in this family’s discourse.

In previous work (Fogle, 2008a) I have shown how Sasha, the younger sibling, used repetition of the initiating turn of the routine (e.g., “My good thing was…”) to gain or regain turns in the conversation with his father and older brother (who often interrupted Sasha). In the following excerpt there is additional evidence that the bad thing/good thing “game” is a conversational routine in the Sondermans’ interaction as Sasha anticipates John’s prompt for a “good thing” based on the form of his utterance, “So tell me,” even though introducing the bad thing/good thing routine was not John’s intent in this particular episode as he notes in line 96.

Excerpt 4.1: So tell me,

(10, April 1, 2006, Dima - 10, Sasha – 8)

92 John: Um,

93 so tell me,

94 ((pause))

95 Sasha: Something good.

96 John: /Well I was gonna say/, tell me about the movie.
Sasha: <burps> Oh, that - that woman who wanted to get, the – all of the dalmatians to make a coat.

((retelling of movie continues))

In this episode Sasha anticipates his father’s prompt and then completes the initiation of the routine with the phrase, “something good” in line 95 suggesting that the bad thing/good thing game was so routinized that it could be recognized by Sasha simply by the prompt opener that John utters in line 93 “So tell me,”.

A review of John’s elicitations of bad thing/good thing suggests that elicitations of the bad thing/good thing were typically posed by John in the form of a question, “So, Dima/Sasha what was your bad thing today” or “So, Dima/Sasha something bad today?” which included discourse marker “so” and nomination of next speaker (one of the children), rather than a prompt formed with directive and nomination of the topic (e.g., tell your father what you did today) as found in the Ochs and Taylor data. Sasha’s anticipation of the routine in this episode is certainly related to John’s use of the discourse marker and a prompt (and pause in the middle of his sentence), but other aspects of its timing probably lead to Sasha’s interpretation of this prompt as an initiation of the bad thing/good thing routine rather than a prompt for some other type of story. Specifically, bad thing/good thing did not occur in the mealtime recording prior to this one (taken the night before, 1N, March 31, 2006) and in other recordings Sasha requests the routine when it has been missed in prior recordings (e.g., six weeks later this occurs in transcript 1S, May 14, 2006). In
addition, the prompt occurred within the first half of the transcript, which is the common start time for the bad thing/good thing routine.

There are other routine aspects of the enactment of this game in Family's interaction. The basic structure in which John initiates the routine and does most of the prompting stays the same over the eight months of recording. John typically prompts child A, then child B, and then prompts himself for bad things and then repeats the process for good things as depicted in Figure 4.3.

![Figure 4.3 Elicitation of bad thing/good thing stories](image)

John selects each boy to go first about equally in the data (excluding two sessions where Dima was not present). Dima is selected nine times and Sasha eight in the recordings where both boys are present (when Dima is not present, John selects Sasha). Even in situations when someone else initiates the routine (i.e. Sasha), John still does the prompting as will be discussed below.
There was also a set of rules that John reiterated during routine. Some of these, such as each person has to tell his bad thing first, John described when asked about the routine in interviews. Others were repeated during several enactments of the routine, such as the bad thing/good thing had to have happened that day, and therefore were considered “rules.” A comprehensive list of stated reminders and rules about the routine included:

1. Bad things first
2. Tellers go in the same order for bad and then good
3. The bad/good thing had to have happened that day
4. The bad/good thing had to have happened to you (not another person)
5. The person selected by John should respond for himself.

Finally, another (unexpected) routine aspect of this discourse practice in Family One's data was the two boys' avoidance responses to their father's prompts. In every one of the instances of the game, at least one boy issues a nothing or other avoidance response. It is this pattern of interaction, father prompts – child avoids responding that I will analyze in more detail and consider to be responsible for the decline in regularity of the routine in the family's mealtimes as the children in Family One were responsible for socializing their father out of the routine, despite his beliefs that it is a valuable family activity.

Start times for bad thing/good thing

One way to measure how regular the routine was in the family’s mealtime conversations is to look at the change in start times for the routine (i.e. John’s
initiating prompt). There were 19 instances of the bad thing/good thing routine found in the recorded data (25 transcripts total; 22 total dinnertimes). Three of the recordings are not mealtimes (one carpool session [1B, December]) and two sessions at home where the family is involved in activities such as planning a trip to Six Flags [1W and 1X, July]). Therefore, there are three missed opportunities where the family is eating dinner but the bad thing/good thing routine did not occur. These missed opportunities occurred in April (1M) and May (1Q and 1R) (Table 4.1).

On average, the initiating elicitation for the routine was issued in the seventh minute of the dinnertime conversation (the average length of dinnertime recordings, which often included post-dinner homework or reading time, rounded to the nearest minute was 32 minutes); however, over the 19 episodes start times ranged from 0:05 in May (i.e. within the first minute of recording 1S when Sasha reminds John to do the routine following two dinnertime recordings where the family did not do it) to 21:50 in Recording V (July, 2006) when the family members forgot about the routine (Figure 4.4). The average length of the bad thing/good thing episode was eight minutes, which often included intervening conversation or topics that “spun off” from the bad thing or good thing being discussed, or in some cases, introduced as alternative topics to bad/good. In general then, about one fifth of the time the family spent at the dinner table together the conversation was bounded by telling about bad things and good things and this conversation occurred somewhere in the first half of the dinnertime activities.
Figure 4.4 Start times of bad thing/good thing routine

Figure 4.4 shows the start times for all of the bad thing/good thing episodes, marked by the first prompt for a bad thing issued in the conversation. Here we can see that the production of the routine becomes irregular by about the tenth recording (K), with the three missed opportunities (i.e. mealtime recordings where the routine did not occur) and very early or very late start times (because the family forgot to do the routine) in the second half of the data recording. By the end of the data collection (transcripts 1V and 1Y), the routine is initiated at the very end of the mealtime and in the last recording, 1Y, the family only tells bad things because they are distracted by another activity (executing a magic trick from a book).
In interviews, John gave two main reasons for the change in start times and growing sporadic nature of the routine over time. On the one hand, he felt that other types of talk had taken the place of the routine telling about the day as seen here:

John: And, so if I feel like there's conversation going and it - they're sharing about their day or we're kind of wondering about something together, then I may just let it go. Uhm. And I feel like we're doing more of that more - there's more dialogue going on.

(May 24, 2006)

And on the other hand, John also indicated he felt a sense of failure in the routine and that he was often met with resistance when trying to initiate it.

In the following sections, I will discuss both the “failure” of the routine and the more active dialogue that John refers to above that takes its place. I will describe the internal changes in the enacting of the routine over the eight months of data collection to explain why the routine seems to fail or lose some of its regularity in the family’s mealtime practices. I start by discussing John’s role as moderator of the routine and the control he exerts on interaction within its boundaries, I then analyze the two boys’ avoidance responses to John’s elicitations and how John changes his own strategies, and finally, based on the analysis of start times above, I will turn to what types of talk take the place of the bad thing/good thing routine in recordings K-Y where the routine is not introduced until the second half of mealtime.
John as moderator

Mothers’ elicitations of talk about the day in middle-class families can be seen as both a power move (Ochs & Taylor, 1995) and a solidarity move (Tannen, 2007) in which mothers control their children’s productions both to hold up the child’s actions for judgment from their father and to establish connections between father and child who do not see each other during the day. This tension between power and solidarity in story elicitations is also found in John’s role as a single father and moderator of the narrative routine. His interest in eliciting stories about bad things and good things in the mealtimes is related to his desire to connect with his children, find out about their lives outside of the home (including aspects of school life that might need his intervention or evaluation), and at the same time help them talk about their experiences and feelings as he states in interviews and explains to Dima when he refuses to participate. The routine also provides a structure for the family conversation through which John can control the type of talk at mealtime and enforce “polite conversation” as is also seen in the interview data as well as the places in the conversations where the routine is initiated (i.e. after long pauses, burps, off-color jokes, and uncomfortable silences).

In relation to Ochs and Capps’ (2001) five dimensional scale, the tellership of the bad thing/good thing routine was, for all intents and purposes, predetermined by “rules” of the game. Each family member told one bad thing in turn and then each family member, in the same order, tells one good thing in turn. Although the original Parade magazine article suggested that the initiator of the routine should be a
different family member each time, in this family John was the primary initiator. This role coincided with John’s view of himself as a facilitator of the children’s development, both linguistic and psychological. It also dovetailed with his desires to “raise” the conversational level of his children seen in this quote where he is talking about reading aloud at breakfast time:

John: Uhm, and I've actually started now reading at breakfast…It's - part of it is self defense, it's like how can we have something that feels like a civil discourse. Instead of, you know fart jokes. (October, 2005)

In keeping with John’s interest in raising the conversational level of his children, at least two of the episodes John initiates the bad thing/good thing routine immediately after an audible burp or off-color joke told by one of the children as in this excerpt:

Excerpt 4.2: Knock knock joke

(1F, 1-17-06, Dima – 10; Sasha – 8)

80 Sasha: Ok.

81 Knock knock,  

82 knock knock!  

83 Dima: Who's there?  

84 Sasha: Uhm, bacon.  

85 Uh, just say uh, bacon who.  

86 John: Bacon who?  

87 Sasha: Bakin’ a DOODIE just for you.  

88 hhhh.
89  hhh.
90  John: Does everything have to be uhm, not nice?
91  Dima: No.
92  Yeh, like doo doo.
94  John: Ok, Sasha something bad for you today?
95  Sasha: Uhm, nothing.
96  John: Nothing bad?

John’s selection of Sasha as first teller in the routine in line 94 here seems directly related to his disapproval of Sasha’s joke and desire to shape his children’s discourse. Here we see the narrative routine becomes a means through which John, a single father, can instill some control onto the discursive production of his sons and maintain what would be considered more polite dinnertime conversation.

The knock-knock joke told here and reference to “impolite” or taboo topic (i.e. excrement) could also be seen to be doing other interactional work in the family. Crystal (1986) suggests that swearing and other types of profane talk by adolescents can be used as a type of “in-group” talk. In addition, Bauman (1977) concluded that children’s control of the knock-knock genre (in the ability to control the outcome) “show the child’s acquisition of his ability to control his communicative environment” (p. 1). Sasha’s introduction of the off-color knock-knock joke at dinnertime invites the two other male members of the family (older brother and father) to join in some “in group” talk and in so doing treats the father John as an
equal interactant in 8-year-old boy talk. John reacts to being “led into” the off-color joke and responds by exerting control over the conversation through protest (echoed by Dima in line 93, “Yeh, like doo doo”) and an elicitation of “higher” level, polite discourse, i.e. talk about the day through the bad thing elicitation.

In some cases John explicitly defended his role as moderator of the bad thing/good thing routine:

Excerpt 4.3: It’s my job

(1C, 12/9/05, Dima – 10, Sasha – 8)

74 John: Dima, somethi::ng bad today?
75 Dima: No.
76 Sasha: Ah, you called out, papa.
77 John: That's my job.
78 Dima: Mm-mm!
79 John: Yes, it's my job.
80 Dima: My job.

Although Dima contradicts his father here, “my job,” in line 80. There are no instances of Dima eliciting bad or good things from the other family members in these data. Sasha did use the elicitation or remind John of the routine several times; however, John was the primary initiator and his explicit defense of this position seems to be related to his use of the routine as a response to being drawn into “schoolboy talk.”
One additional way that John exerted control over the mealtime interactions in general and the boys’ telling about the day in specific is through evaluation of the bad thing/good thing narratives. As a single father, John played the role of both initiator and primary recipient, and like the fathers in Ochs and Taylor’s (1995) study, he often passed judgment on the children’s reported actions in the narratives. Negative evaluations from John (for good things in addition to bad things as seen below) can lead the children to “retract” their narrative and contribute to the avoidance tactics used by Dima especially as I will analyze further below. In the following excerpt Sasha finishes up his good thing about doing well in dance class and then elicits a good thing from Dima.

Excerpt 4.4: Kissed by a girl
(1E, 1/15/06, Dima – 10, Sasha – 8)

320 Sasha: And uh, we got to go in front of the line.
321 First, <pause> and uh,
322 <chewing>
323 and uh, we - we were doin' a GOOD JOB, so we, we uh, but we didn't get a snack.
324 Ok?
325 Dima, something good <cough>.
326 Yeh.
327 <cough>
328 Dima, something good.
<cough>

330 Dima: That I got kissed by a girl today.
331 John: Kissed by a girl <falling>.
332 Dima: Uh-huh.
333 John: Ah, when did this happen?
334 Dima: No::: time at all.
335 John: Oh.
336 Dima: Mm,
337 Aw, what did happen good?
338 There's lots of red on that picture.

In this excerpt Sasha elicits a good thing from Dima in line 325, seemingly related to his wanting his turn to be over (as suggested by his question Ok? in line 324 and impatience to select Dima). Dima’s “good thing,” that he got kissed by a girl, is met with a disapproving tone from John and probing for further details, i.e. a clarification request that would serve to establish the orientation for the story, “Ah, when did this happen?” in line 333 (Ochs & Capps, 2001). While the question literally elicits further orientation from Dima, the contextualization cues in terms of tone of voice suggest that the event is also being negatively evaluated at the same time. Dima “retracts” his story by negating the existence of orientation, “no time at all,” and thereby avoids the threat of further evaluation. He then changes the topic to a photograph or picture in line 338, “There’s lots of red on that picture.” In this excerpt from January, Dima
attempted to introduce a topic that could be considered borderline or even taboo in at mealtime with his parent (i.e. romantic activity with a girl), and perhaps the fact that Sasha and not John elicited the “good thing” from Dima opened the door for a less constrained topic choice. In other situations Dima more directly avoids telling about his day, and eventually John changes his strategies as will be seen below.

Avoiding participation

In a summary of narrative research and conceptualizations of self, Ochs and Capps (1997) identify minimal responses (one-word responses or no response) as a characteristic of middle-class U.S. children’s responses to parental elicitation of narratives. Minimal responses can arise from the child’s persistent role as protagonist in narratives at mealtime in this group of families and represent an attempt to avoid scrutiny and evaluation as seen in the above excerpt (Ochs & Taylor, 1995). In these data, roughly 35 narratives were produced in response to bad thing prompts, 31 in response to good thing prompts, and 4 were uncategorizable (because they occurred around the prompts or there was confusion over if a good or bad thing was being discussed). In addition, 11 stories occurred that “spun off” from bad and good thing narratives. However, more frequent than the actual telling of a story or report was the use of a minimal response, i.e. the “nothing” response, designed to avoid the storytelling activity altogether.

Nothing responses, which usually took the form of “nothing” or “I don’t know,” to bad thing/good thing prompts were present in almost all of the routines present in these data. Sasha and Dima offer this response about equally (this includes
repetitions of “nothing” in the same turn-prompt sequence). However Dima is a little more consistent with the response (there is only one transcript where he doesn’t use the nothing response compared to Sasha who has four episodes where he doesn’t use it and one where he uses it seven times in a sort of language play – “I got nothin’!”) In addition, John reacts negatively to Dima’s use of the nothing response (saying it is not acceptable or to find another answer) whereas when Sasha uses the nothing response John usually responds with a move on tactic (“Nothing? Ok.”) or mock disbelief (“Nothing bad all day?). For these two reasons I will focus on Dima’s use of the nothing response and not Sasha’s.

*Dima’s “nothing” response*

Dima is fairly consistent in his use of the nothing response, and there is little change seen over the eight months of data collection in frequency of “nothing” or “I don’t know” in response to his father’s prompts. What does change over time is what happens after Dima’s utterance of this response.

In the first four mealtime transcripts (A – E, December – January), John typically offers a topic suggestion for a bad thing when Dima gives a nothing response as seen in Excerpt 4.5.

**Excerpt 4.5: Homework**

(1A, December 7, 2005)

80  John:  Now what's your bad thing for today?

81  Dima:  Nothin'.

82  John:  Nothing bad today?
83  Dima: Mm-mm.
84  John: All day long?
85  Dima: Hm-mm.
86  John: What about homework?
87  Dima: Hm-mm.
88  John: That wasn't bad?
89          So why were you, 
90          screamin’ and hollerin’?
91  Dima: I don't know.

In the first four transcripts where bad thing/good thing occurs, John used this
tactic (i.e. suggesting a bad or good thing) three times in three different transcripts and
explicitly rejected Dima’s response by saying, “find a different answer” once. In this
context the prompting to tell a specific story, about homework for example,
represented an accommodating move in which John allowed Dima’s nothing response
by providing a story for him. In addition, this strategy can led to co-construction of
bad things as in the continuation of the excerpt above some lines later when John self
elicits a bad thing, Dima suggests, “me screamin' and hollerin’,” and John agrees that
that was his bad thing. The bad thing then becomes a forum for commenting on or
complaining about each other’s earlier behaviors through the co-construction of
evaluation.

The last transcript of this series where John nominated topics for Dima is 1E,
which takes place in January and is discussed above in Excerpt 4.4 (Kissed by a girl).
In this transcript, John nominated a bad thing topic for Dima, “you had to squish a sea monkey,” but Sasha elicited the good thing from Dima. In the following three transcripts (F – H, January 17, 18, and 20), John responded to Dima’s nothing response in a slightly different way – instead of offering a topic for Dima, he makes explicit comments about Dima’s non-participation (“Give it some thought,” “You always say that,” and “This is a chance to think about your day.”). In 1G, John used an imagined identity of Dima’s, that of a future spy, to comment on his unwillingness to participate (you’re already like a spy because you hide your feelings). These strategies, which are less accommodating in that they explicitly comment on Dima’s unwillingness to participate and require Dima to respond by choosing to participate or not (and not having John participate for him), do result in greater participation by Dima. In Transcript H, January 20, Dima produces two narratives about a girl Jane in school in response to John’s more demanding elicitations:

Excerpt 4.6: Jane got hit

(1H, January 20, Dima – 10; Sasha – 8)

54 John: How bout you?
55 Dima: Ah.
56 U:h.
57 ((pause, eating))
58 John: Hmm?
59 Dima: N - nothing.
60 Sasha: Something bad for me?
61 John: Dima, <pause> try.
62 Dima: Nothing!
63 John: Nothing at all happened today that you would - you were frustrated with or would change?
64 Dima: Ok, ok.
65 John: This is a chance to think back through your day,
66 ((pause))
67 Dima: Jane got hit!

After Dima’s first nothing response in line 59, Sasha selects himself as the next teller in line 60, “Something bad for me?” This move can be seen as an effort on the part of Sasha to avoid family conflict as in the past two transcripts (three days apart) John has criticized or commented on Dima’s non-participation. So Sasha takes on the role of willing participant to smooth over his brother’s resistance, which is evident in line 96 where John elicits a bad thing from Sasha, “Anything bad for you?” to which Sasha responds, “no” (suggesting that maybe he had nothing to tell).

In line 61 John ignores Sasha’s self elicitation, suggesting that this routine is more about his relationship with Dima at this point, and reiterates the purpose of the interaction: “This is a chance to think about your day…” After being “put on the spot” Dima pauses and then produces the proposition, “Jane got hit.” This statement represents the climax of a longer story that, based on this utterance alone, fulfills the criteria of being a disruption, a problem, and an unexpected event. In the continuation of this excerpt, John becomes engaged by this event and elicits more information.
However, it turns out that Dima did not witness the event himself (he heard about it), which reduces his validity as storyteller (as John ends up chuckling to himself as though he did not take the story seriously).

In transcripts I – K (February 24 – March 1), there are mixed responses to Dima’s nothing response. In 1I Dima told a bad thing and good thing without using “nothing”, in 1J John accepted “nothing” and doesn’t prompt further, perhaps because Dima had been participating in the recent dinners, and in K John responds with extended elicitation, “try thinking.” In 1K, the start time for the routine was later than in previous transcripts, and this represents the start of the change in the regularity of the routine. Up to this point, then we have seen growing conflict between John and Dima over resistance to the routine, John’s change in strategies has worked for a time, but the conflict seemed to be arising again. At this point in the chronology (Transcript 1K) John began to initiate the routine later or not at all in the mealtimes.

Interestingly Dima at this point also changed his strategies in participating in the routine. In specific, he began to use it for some specific purposes, namely to lodge complaints about teachers at school or his father’s actions and thereby becomes the evaluator of others rather than the protagonist set up for evaluation by his father. This practice also occurred in earlier examples when either Dima or Sasha say that their bad thing was losing electronics time or not getting recess, but these later examples with Dima involved a more explicit complaint and construction of Dima as a protagonist who has been wronged by an adult as we see in Excerpt 4.7.

Excerpt 4.7: You kept me waiting
John: How 'bout you Dima?

Dima: That you were /???,/ that I was in the Pre-K class too long.

John: You were in the Pre-K class too long?

Dima: Yeh.

I mean, I had, uh you kept me waiting.

John: I kept you waiting?

Dima: Mhm.

John: Oh, goodness.

Dima: Plus there's nothing to do.

John: Mhm.

Sasha: /Me too/.

John: So the bad thing was that you had to be there longer than you wanted to be?

Dima: Yeh.

John: Mhm.

John: Was that part of why you're mad?

Dima: Mhm.

Plus the kids /???./

In this transcript, some latent conflict between Dima and John is evident. In line 3 at the opening of dinner, John comments that he doesn’t like Dima’s tone for example. Dima actively responds to the bad thing elicitation here, “That you were – that I was
in the Pre-K class too long,” (line 110) suggesting that Dima was waiting for an opportunity to complain about this event. He then revises the imposition, “You kept me waiting,” (line 113) to which John responds with a kind of surprise, “Oh, goodness.” (Line 116) Here Dima is not only telling about a bad thing, he is complaining about his father’s actions and taking on the role of both teller and evaluator of others’ actions (rather than holding himself up for evaluations). This puts John, who later in the conversation explains that he was late because of work, on the defensive. A similar storytelling event occurs in transcript 1N when Dima responded to the bad thing elicitation that the whole day was bad and then initiates a narrative, “Because Ms. Lisa even disobeys her own rules,” describing an event where he was not recognized in class even though his hand was raised. For the following two transcripts (1U and 1V) Dima was not present, and in the last one John again directly commented on Dima’s use of a nothing response “that’s not an acceptable answer,” though he does so in a performed voice, possibly to mitigate the demand. Dima offers a one-liner, and the whole family gets involved in another activity (doing a magic trick from a book) so that they do not turn to good things in that recording.

In these examples we see how Dima’s resistance to his father’s prompts for bad thing narratives in particular, but also good things, influenced his father to change his own response strategies when met with resistance. In summary, in the first four mealtimes collected for this study (1A, 1C, 1D, & 1E), John responded to Dima’s nothing responses with what I consider to be a more accommodating response where he moved on and accepted “nothing” or he prompted Dima again by suggesting a
topic for him. By providing the bad thing for Dima, then, John avoided conflict over participating in the routine by participating for Dima. In transcripts F – H (January 17 – January 20) John stopped providing suggestions for Dima’s bad and good things and instead made explicit comments about Dima’s non-participation in the routine. These strategies (over the three dinnertimes in four days) worked in the sense that Dima began to tell more stories in response to the elicitations, but the stories he told are typically about his growing relationships with girls and transgressions in the classroom on their behalf. These stories are met with negative evaluation from John (as seen in the “I got kissed by a girl” episode), and the undercurrent of tension around the routine remains. In transcripts I – K (February – March) I noted a mixed response from John to Dima’s nothing responses, with a little more tolerance for non-participation suggesting perhaps that John was trying to decide how to enforce the routine or perhaps beginning to give it up to avoid conflict. Starting with transcript K, the irregularity of start times began, and this seems to be a final strategy that led to less and less frequency of initiating the routine. When the routine was initiated in these later transcripts, Dima used the opportunity to lodge complaints about others’ (his father’s or teachers’) actions toward him. In this sense, Dima has negotiated the goals of the routine in such a way that he is no longer the protagonist whose actions are held up for evaluation, rather he takes on the role of teller and evaluator of others’ actions (setting himself up as the wronged protagonist). Dima’s changing contributions to the routine suggest that he has at once mastered both the structure and
function of the bad thing/good thing genre and have ultimately used it to serve a different purpose, i.e. to socialize his father out of the routine.

_Sasha’s deferred response_

While Dima’s nothing response was a source of conflict in interactions between father and son and became a site for negotiating interactional roles, Sasha’s nothing responses (which occur in all but four bad thing/good thing routines) were largely ignored by John who usually accepted them or responded with mock surprise, “Nothing bad today?” This probably had to do with a number of factors including Sasha’s younger age, the challenge associated with him getting speaking time in the family conversations (see Fogle, 2008 for more discussion), and the fact that Sasha used another avoidance strategy, the deferred elicitation seen below in Excerpt 4.8, in tandem with the nothing response that made him appear to be a more willing participant in the routine.

Excerpt 4.8: It would be your turn now

(N, March 31, 2006)

262 Dima: Just kidding.
263 I don't know.
264 We're having pizza.
265 John: That's a good thing?
266 Sasha: You go first.
267 John: It would be your turn now.
268 Sasha: You go first!
In this episode John accepts Sasha’s role reversal (in line 270 where he initiates his own good thing), and Sasha effectively avoids telling his good thing as John does not go back to prompt again. By appropriating part of the routine, i.e. the elicitation, Sasha appears to be a willing participant although he is not producing the required narrative response. In this sense, then we can see that while the ostensible goal of the routine is to elicit narratives about the day from the children and thereby construct a power structure in the family hierarchy in which John is initiator and recipient of such narratives (Ochs & Taylor, 1995), a second, more implicit goal is to establish family solidarity and a sense of harmony through the telling about the day routine (Tannen, 2007). John’s acceptance of Sasha’s non-participation because he uses a tactic that makes him appear to be participating, i.e. eliciting bad things or good things from another family member and remembering the routine, suggests that on one level John is interested primarily in the boys’ willing engagement in the family activity than the actual stories that emerge in response to the elicitations.

Revising the first eight minutes
As the bad thing/good thing routine loses its regular status in the first half of mealtime conversations starting with transcript 1K, it is interesting to look at what types of talk take its place in order to have a better view of what the family members
are doing in interaction – are they telling other stories or engaging in other types of talk? Is this talk initiated by John (as in the routine) or by the children? Do the children show as much resistance to other types of talk or do they engage freely? I will address these questions in this section.

In transcripts 1K-1Y (recorded in months February – July), when the start times for the bad thing/good thing routine grow erratic, different types of talk take the place of the initiating prompt for a bad thing in the first eight minutes of the mealtime conversation. These types of talk included not only narratives, but also language play (both metalinguistic and fantasy), metalinguistic talk, and academic discourse (i.e. recounting items on a geography quiz or talking through math problems), some of which took the form of or are embedded in narratives (for example, Sasha initiates an imaginary game of football with a tomato in which is father is the announcer for the game and Sasha the protagonist). They also included retellings of movie plots, newspaper articles, comic book episodes, and other works of fiction. In total in these 10 transcripts where the bad thing/good thing was initiated, 40 narratives were told before the bad thing prompt. That is half the total number of narratives told within the bad thing/good thing boundaries across all 19 transcripts. In addition, Dima or Sasha initiated 20 of these narratives. These findings suggest that the time spent outside of the bad thing/good thing routine was more productive time for narrative activities, and, moreover, provided more opportunity for the two boys to select and tell their own stories as John had mentioned in interviews.
Narratives of other times

While the interactions within the boundaries of the bad thing/good thing routine for the most part were constrained by John’s elicitations, prompts, and evaluations, the stories that were told spontaneously in the data by both the children and John functioned more as a site of long-term identity construction (than negotiation of interactional roles). In these stories we see not only talk about the day, but talk about events in the distant past, plans for the future, and generalizations about the world that take the form of narratives. For example, John initiated talk about hosting a brunch in the future by asking the boys what they would serve (constructing the three members of the family as “hosts” to imagined “guests”), he talked about his own past acting in a drama troupe in college and meeting Glenn Close, and he engaged in a good bit of future talk about the next school year, new teachers, etc. all of which contained elements of narrative. It is these narratives, that took place in different times (not that day) that I believe were relevant to the new family as a site of identity construction as we can see in Excerpt 4.9.

Excerpt 4.9: We live right next to the field
(1N, 3/31/06, Dima – 10, Sasha – 8)

122   John:   So, soccer game's tomorrow, hopefully,

123            ((pause rattling))


125   Dima:   Daddy, do woman usually have wooden legs or m/e/n?

126   John:   Hh <exhale>.
Dima: When their leg is broken off?

John: Nowadays?

Dima: Uh-huh.

John: Nobody has wooden legs anymore.

Dima: I mean, in the olden times.

John: It would have been the same.

They used what they had.

You know, it depends on what the technology was.

Dima: I mean like - like those pirates with one leg

John: Yeh?

I - ah - I would GUESS that women didn't lose their legs as often as men did,

Dima: Huhh.

John: 'cause men would have been more likely to get their legs shot off or,

eaten by sharks,

or, caught in a combine, or somethin' like that.

Sasha: [/caught in/]

Dima: [I know] what that is.

John: Mhm.

Dima: They have a lot of them in Ukraine because we leave - live right next to the fe – field.

John: <pause, cough> And did you see combines going back and forth and
[harvesting wheat]?

147 Dima: [Oh yeh.]

148 John: <cough>

149 Sasha: /And we got/ - and we got - we could have a lot of bread,

150 and uh, we had a lot of bread, and a lot of /those sees/ to - uh - seeds
to . feed to the chickens.

151 John: Did the chickens go walking in the field or did your grandma go get
the seeds and bring 'em back?

152 Dima: [Uh-huh]

153 Sasha: [No], but we had this big ca:se, and it was almost full of seeds.

154 Uh, those kind and, she - uh - put them in a pan and /??/? and throw it
out.

155 John: Here chicky, chicky, chicky.

156 What did she say?

157 What - how - what do they - how do they say

158 Sasha: /Here chicken/.

159 John: In Ukrainian what do they say?

160 Sasha: I don't know.

161 Dima: I don't - /I forgot/.

162 John: What's the word for chicken?

163 Sasha: Chicken.

164 Here chicken.
Dima: Hoooo, coot a coot a coot a coo. Hooo, coot a coot a,

This narrative is one of two told in the data analyzed here (i.e. within the bad thing/good thing routine or the first eight minutes of the final transcripts) about the children’s lives in Ukraine (although other talk about pre-adoptive life also occurs in these transcripts when the family plans to write a letter to the children’s Ukrainian grandmother or when John tries to get the boys to speak Russian, for example). From a conventional perspective, this narrative does not look very much like a prototypical story. There is no “tellable event” and no complicating action to speak of. The goal of the narrative here is really to solve a metalinguistic problem, for Dima to show his knowledge of the word “combine” in line 143 where he states, “I know what that is…,” and then for the family members to figure out what chickens were called in Ukrainian, “What did she say?” (Line 156) “What’s the word for chicken?” (Line 162). There is, however, some temporal sequencing of the activity of going out to feed the chickens, and the story takes on a quality of something like a narrative about “the way things were.”

The main difference in this narrative and the actual stories produced in the bad thing/good thing routine has to do with John’s interactional role. Within the structure of the routine, John elicits and evaluates the children’s stories, placing them in a vulnerable role as storyteller. In those stories, the children have to negotiate their problems and evaluative points with John, usually in a way that agrees with the parental perspective. In this narrative, however, John takes on a different role as an
audience member learning about what life was like in Ukraine and his sons’ past histories. His questions contribute to the unfolding of this narrative as he prompts the boys to tell him more about the setting and habitual events on the farm rather than working out the details of a specific deed or event at school.

De Fina (2003a) showed how orientations in narratives of disorienting experiences (such as border crossings by immigrants) connect narrators and interlocutors to micro and macro social contexts. Here, Sasha’s elaboration on the orientation provided by Dima serves to paint a picture of “what life was like in Ukraine” that is part of a long-term construction of the children’s past lives in relation to their new environment. In this case John acts as an “unknowing” audience as the boys talk about their knowledge of farm equipment and important aspects of life on the farm (i.e. bread and seeds). John elicits more information from Sasha, moving the narrative from orientation details to a type of problem and event, “Did your grandma go get the seeds and bring ‘em back?” But this is still a generalization of events asking how something was usually done rather than what happened in a specific incident. The narrative event, complicating action, or disruption in this narrative then is to untangle a memory, which finally is tied to remembering language, “What did she say?...What’s the word for chicken?” This collaboration from John and the questions he asks prompt the children to see the story of life in Ukraine from a different perspective and to construct that story from the view of the world as it is now (i.e. in an English-speaking family in urban America). Contrasting this story to the stories told within the boundaries of the bad thing/good thing prompts, we see that
spontaneous stories initiated by Dima and Sasha afforded them the opportunity to move beyond “talk about the day” to connecting events and scenes in their lives on other timescales, to construct themselves as children with a history in a different time and place, to remember the past and reconstruct it in the new language and against the perspective of the new audience, and to involve their father in making sense of the events in their prior lives.

In a related example, John’s good thing, a conversation with his children in the car transforms into an elicitation sequence in which John introduces some scientific discourse (What do you remember about the kidneys – what do they do?), which then inspires narratives (coded as spin-off stories) from Dima and Sasha about bodily functions.

Excerpt 4.10: Kidneys
(1K, 3/1/06, Dima – 10, Sasha - 8)

449 John: Let's see, my good thing,
450 Dima: Hmm[hhh].
451 Sasha: [Yucko].
452 Dima: Hmh.
453 John: Let's see what's my good thing?
454 Um,
455 Sasha: Ahh hhh <inhale, eating>
456 Dima: Can I call - call Patrick after dinner?
457 John: My good thing,
Sasha: <slurping>

Dima: Can I?

John: Was going downtown, and picking up my children, and having a nice conversation with them on the way home.

About kidney stones,

Sasha: Oooo!

Dima: That really hurt.

John: You remember.

Sasha: <inhale> I'm done /??/.

John: What do you remember the - about the kidneys?

What do they do?

Dima: Th[ey],

Sasha: [They ss -]

Dima: [Suck up all the] bad stuff from your liquids.

Sasha: [get uhm - uh -]

Yeh.

Dima: That you drink.

Sasha: Yeh.

Dima: And then they /to/ pee, pee it all out.

That's why - hey, Elijah when we were in Fitness,

we usually sit - uh - sit on the stairs on the back uh stairway,

and - and we uh usually talk about our bodies and stuff.
And - and - and once we were talking about the kidneys, and Elijah said, "My pee comes out green."  

Hhh.  

Sasha: Hahhahhhh.  

John: Hmm, that must mean his kidneys aren't doing their job.  

Dima: Once my poop was red.  

Sasha: [Oh, uh.]  

John: [/???]  

Dima: [You know] why, 'cause I ate a - a lot of, what is it called?  

John: Be[ets].  

Dima: [Beets]!  

Sasha: Once uh I ate a lot of - a lot of beets too, and it was eh - and my friend uh - uh - uh - in Ukraine, he a - ate a lot of beets.  

Uh, he was going to the bathroom, he like pghhh.  

Let me look at my poop.  

Ooo, it's red, [ah]!  

John: [Oo hoo].  

Dima: [Look, daddy].  

Sasha: Blood is [coming out, ah].  

Dima: Look, look, look, daddy.  

((topic changes))
In this episode John allows for a type of “taboo” talk by introducing a type of scientific/school-related topic about the function of the kidneys, co-mingling his good thing story and a pedagogical prompt for more information about the function of kidneys. This is a departure of sorts from John’s father “script” as he is still the initiator and evaluator of the children’s talk, but in content he allows for an otherwise “taboo” topic in his initiation.

The narratives told in this excerpt move from the here and now (i.e. good thing that happened today) to more distant and remote times and places:

1. John - today in the car (conversation about kidney stones) (Line 460)
2. Dima - One time in the past year at school (pee was green) (Line 477)
3. Dima - One time in distant past (location not marked – ate beets) (Line 485)
4. Sasha - One time in distant past in Ukraine (poop was red) (Line 491)

Ochs and Capps (2001) suggest that orientation sequences borrow on shared knowledge between interlocutors about settings or expected events in order to build the suspense necessary for telling the unexpected event, “narratives cohere in part because tellers rely upon interlocutor’s background knowledge about typical orderings of events over time” (p. 131). In immigration chronicles, De Fina (2003a) showed how orientations became sites of negotiations where interlocutors build knowledge of place and time. In this sequence of narratives, we see a progression in the explicit marking of more distant narrative events in terms of place and time.

Dima tells two narratives in a row, the first about talking with friends at school and the second when his poop was red. He marks the time and place of the first
narrative, but not the second. In Dima’s second narrative, however, we have some indication of time and place from implicit cues such as the fact that he can’t remember the word “beets” in English and asks his father, “What is it called?,” this along with the background fact that beets are a staple of the Ukrainian diet suggest that Dima is recalling a more distant time when he spoke a different language.

Sasha takes up the topic as well in line 491, “Once I ate a lot of beets too,” using the personal pronoun “I” as a type of strategy to maintain lexical cohesion, which he then revises to “he,” “it was my friend – he at a lot of beets” (Line 492). At this point Sasha marks the place (and correspondingly the time as pre-adoption) in line 492 “in Ukraine” and continues with the story. Contrasted to Dima’s story about Elijah in lines (477 – 481), this story is vague. Sasha does not use his friend’s name, and he doesn’t situate the event in terms of place and time other than to say “in Ukraine”. The need to finally designate a place (and time) in this talk about beets and poop suggests an awareness of John as audience and the effort to construct shared knowledge about the past between father and sons.

These two stories of life in Ukraine occur outside of turns in the bad thing/good thing routine (i.e. in time prior to the initiating bad thing elicitation and as a spinoff story from a father’s good thing). In general we have seen that John’s prompting strategies can both constrain and afford the children’s (and especially Dima’s) productions of narratives within the routine. However, here we have some indication that stories told across timescales and of more personal relevance in constructing the children’s histories are told outside of direct prompts from John.
Other stories of the children’s past lives in Ukraine and lives together as a family occur in these data in general, but not within the boundaries of bad thing/good thing. The stories produced in bad thing/good thing then can be seen to have some functions of immediate importance, i.e. to make a complaint about another’s behavior or praise and in some ways to serve as a first draft for the construction of more tellable stories as well as to negotiate family roles. In fact, it seems the importance of bad thing/good thing in this family is a negotiation of power and relationships more than actual storytelling events and this is related to the interactional roles of the participants within the routine talk about the day versus the more prototypical or spontaneous story types.

Timescales, interactional roles, and tellings

Ochs and Taylor’s groundbreaking work on narrative socialization middle-class U.S. families in the early 1990s has led to new perspectives on the conversational narrative as co-constructed and the role of narratives in family interactions (Ochs & Capps, 2001). In the various papers published from this research project, Ochs, Taylor, and colleagues found that interactional roles in collaborative narrative tellings were essentially gendered roles (Ochs & Taylor, 1995) and that narrative tellings constituted a problem solving activity in which social and cognitive processes interacted (Ochs et al., 1992; Ochs & Taylor, 1992). In these papers narratives are defined as past time “stories and reports” with stories having a problem solving orientation and reports not oriented toward problem solving. In reviewing the data presented in these papers for analysis in light of the above
discussion of time and orientation in adoptive family narratives, an interesting trend emerges.

Ochs and Taylor’s (1995) analysis of interactional roles and gender relations in family storytelling involves analysis primarily of stories and reports about the day or the very recent past, even though it is stated that all past time narratives were considered for the study. In contrast, the Ochs et al. (1992) paper where family storytelling is linked to scientific discourse and theory-building in family interaction involves analysis of stories that take place in the more distant past (e.g., a child’s eating a hot pepper as a baby). While the authors do not explicitly make this point, it seems that this division of stories on the basis of time along with the findings from the current analysis of adoptive family talk indicate that talk about the day involves an interactional pattern that revolves around negotiating power relations in the family while talk about other times affords more collaborative storytelling and opportunity for higher level cognitive and social processes such as family theory building or identity construction.

One way to explain the differences between talk about the day and stories of the more distant past (or future) can be found in Lemke’s (2000) discussion of timescales as a means for understanding the organization of social systems. Lemke proposes the idea of timescales in social science research as a way to understand how social processes (and actions such as the production of an utterance) are constrained by events occurring on longer timescales. For classroom interaction, for example, utterances within a lesson are constrained by the time allotted for the class, which is
constrained by the school calendar, etc. Lemke’s focus is on how an artifact (i.e. a notebook) crosses these timescales (from the moment of jotting notes to its recycling in other lessons and study sessions) to take on longer-term meanings. In the case of the Sondermans’ interactions, we can see different narrative activities as affording different opportunities to construct identities on different timescales.

*Stories about the day vs. narratives of other times*

In addition to differences in the construction of times and timescales in these two different types of narrative activities in Family One, the interactional structures or participant structures in these two activities also lead to very different types of outcomes for the participants. In routine narrative activities, the interactional roles of parent and children and specifically the need for the child to tell a story with an evaluative point that is then negotiated with a more powerful parent sets up a conflictual dynamic. More spontaneous, child-initiated narratives that do not necessarily have a point, but can rather take the form of collaboratively told settings or stories of distant events allowed for more active participation on the part of the children in which identities are constructed on longer timescales. In sum, routine talk about the day and spontaneous narratives initiated by the children constituted two different types of narrative activities in Family One. The routine talk led to resistance, but that resistance seemed mainly related to the need for the children to conform to constraints of the more prototypical story form where the child’s telling of events is held up for evaluation. The less constrained and more open narratives that
the children themselves introduced led to greater collaboration in constructing the narrative and more possibilities for the children to take on different interactional roles.

In the two examples of life in Ukraine presented above, the orientation of the narratives and the role of John as audience and co-collaborator not only allows children the opportunity to depict their past lives, but in doing so, they construct a past in relation to the present with John as an audience and co-collaborator. John’s prompts about how chickens were called in Ukrainian and Sasha’s explicit marking of an implicit place, Ukraine, suggest that through these storytelling events the family constructs shared knowledge about the children’s (unstable) past and a coherent family identity. The timescales that are evident (through the interactional and discursive features analyzed above) in these narratives then, range from the moment-to-moment negotiation of parent-child roles in the family to constructions of the children willing (or unwilling) participants in family activities over time to constructions of the family from the point in time where histories are shared to the constructions of the children’s life stories through negotiating how (and if) to represent life in Ukraine as something different from life in the United States.

Conclusions

In this chapter I have described a narrative game that the single father in Family One instituted as a routine part of mealtime conversations in order to provide a structure for the family members to share about their day in a way that also promoted polite discourse and discouraged schoolboy talk. Through an analysis of the interactional structure of the routine, specifically the children’s resistance to their
father’s elicitations of bad thing and good thing stories, I have concluded that talk about the day constitutes a site of power negotiations in everyday routine interactions in the family. In contrast to this quotidian negotiation, which over time can lead to constructions of parents as judges and children as unwilling participants, spontaneous narratives initiated by children lead to construction of identities on different timescales. In this sense, the need to tell a “story” that fits into a predetermined structure with one evaluative outcome seems to constrain the children’s narrative activities. In this chapter I find that narratives about the distant past that do not have one identifiable point initiated by adoptees can lead to the construction of shared knowledge about the children’s pre-adoption lives and family identity construction, important processes in international adoptees’ formation of a sense of self. These findings have implications for the study of narrative socialization of family interaction and understandings of narrative practices in middle-class American families. They also demonstrate the varied types of talk young second language learners can take part in and even direct in everyday interactions.
Chapter 5: ‘But now we’re your daughter and son!’: Language-related episodes in Family Two

Arkadiy and Anna Jackson-Wessels arrived in the U.S. less than one year prior to the start of the data collection, and the family’s recordings captured benchmark events in their lives together such as the children’s first Thanksgiving and preparations to start school. The Jackson-Wessels were unique among the adoptive parents in this study for their choice to homeschool their oldest son Arkadiy (Anna attended a part-time preschool). They were also a member of a minority in the U.S. for this choice; Princiotta and Bielick (2006) report that only about 2.2% of all students in the United States were homeschooled in 2003. Adoptive families, however, and particularly those with older adopted children, make up an active subsection of the homeschooling population as is evident on listservs and blogs devoted to the topic in addition to online articles discussing the benefits of homeschooling for older adoptees (Greko-Akerman, 2006; Wilson, 2007). Parents of older adoptees sometimes prefer homeschooling because it provides a way for parents to address the assumed psychological and emotional issues associated with post-institutionalization (Greko-Akerman).

Like Family One, the father, Kevin, in Family Two played the role of primary caregiver; however, unlike John in Family One, Kevin was a stay-at-home homeschool teacher. The homeschool setting and close contact between children and father in this family contributed to a “hothouse” environment for Arkadiy, and to
some extent Anna, where his primary interactants were his parents and the line between the roles of parent and teacher, especially for Kevin, were often blurred. One of the daily challenges in Family Two was finding ways for parents and children to communicate with each other. Because there was little outside influence on the children’s language learning in the form of ESOL classes or Russian-language tutors for example, the family members negotiated meaning in their conversations through the use of specific communication strategies that centered around negotiation of lexical items.

In this chapter I examine how the children play a leading role in obtaining comprehensible input and negotiating the communicative environment through the use of questions primarily aimed at eliciting the names of objects or word definitions from the parents in everyday conversations. Through qualitative and quantitative analyses of such question-response sequences, I show how over time the parents come to anticipate problem spots in the discourse and provide explanations about words or word meanings. These findings, I argue, suggest that the children in Family Two have socialized their parents to change their interactional strategies to better meet their children’s language learning needs. The questions the children use to initiate language-related episodes serve as both a language-learning and a social tool through which children not only negotiate the conversational level but also control the turn-taking patterns in the family conversation. Lexical language-related episodes in particular provide opportunities for the parents in Family Two to learn about the children’s linguistic competencies and for all family members to co-construct world
views through discussions of word meanings that connect to their lived experiences. I conclude that these processes are related to both the children’s developing language competencies and the parents’ growing understanding of their children’s linguistic needs and that in this way the language socialization processes through which family discourses and meanings are co-constructed are collaborative process.

Literature Review

Metalanguage as an area of inquiry

The study of metalanguage, most commonly defined as talk about talk, has spanned disciplinary borders to draw from the fields of logic, language teaching and learning (Berry, 2007), and language attitudes and ideologies (Jaworski, Coupland & Galasinski, 2004; King & Ganuza, 2005; Niedzielski & Preston, 2000; Zilles & King, 2005). As researchers strive to understand how languages are used and learned in everyday interactions, and at the same time, how knowledge about language is obtained and attitudes toward languages are formed, the way that individuals talk about talk becomes increasingly important to understanding language awareness, language ideologies and the role language and discourse play in constructing the social world. For language socialization research in specific, the interest in talk about talk has centered on an explicit type of metalanguage (see Jakobson, 1985; Verschuren, 2007), namely caregivers’ use of comments and directives used to influence children’s language and other behaviors (Blum-Kulka, 1997; De Geer et al., 2002). This chapter contributes to this area of research by focusing on children’s
rather than caregivers’ use and elicitation of metalinguistic talk in the family conversations.

Language-related episodes in second language research

In the study of second language acquisition, learners’ talk about language in so-called language-related episodes (Swain & Lapkin, 1995) has been noted to “push” learners’ development and lead to the awareness of new forms. Swain and Lapkin defined language-related episodes as segments of talk in which learners either speak explicitly about a language problem (and then solve it or don’t) or solve a problem without explicitly identifying it as such. Fortune and Thorp (2001) expanded on this taxonomy and identified four categories of language-related episodes: lexical, grammatical, discourse, and orthographic. For both studies, the criteria for language-related episodes were developed in coding experimental data in which learners followed a protocol that involved collaboratively completing a written task while at the same time using a think-aloud procedure. The language-related episodes coded in interactional, experimental data are not as ambiguous as those in naturalistic interaction because they occur during learning activities that are designed to elicit such types of talk.

In contrast, in everyday talk outside of explicit learning settings, second language users often circumvent language problems through discourse strategies such as circumlocution or avoidance (see for example Bialystok, 1990). However, language-related episodes found in experimental and classroom interactions are similar to the types of metalanguage found in language socialization outside of
instructional or pedagogic settings. In this chapter I will draw from the notion of language-related episode from second language research with perspectives on metalanguage in parent-child interaction to show relationships between second language learning and socialization in this environment. These two approaches are both relevant to understanding the discourse processes in Family Two as second language learning for Arkadiy and Anna is closely associated with parent-child interaction.

Metalanguage in family language socialization

Schieffelin’s (1990) account of the role of parent directives in both child language learning and socialization represents a seminal work in language socialization. Schieffelin (1990) described Kaluli mothers’ use of direct instruction through the directive “ɛlɛma.” The use of this directive was tied to community wide beliefs that young children needed to be shown language in order to understand, but mothers did not make an explicit connection between ɛlɛma as a pedagogical practice and the belief that adults needed to ‘show language’ (p. 76). The use of ɛlɛma and other prompts, instead, was tied to societal norms where children were not considered to be interactional partners but could serve as a voice for parents in interaction with a third party. This study showed important connections about parents’ beliefs about language and their children as language learners, the role of children as interactional partners in society, and parents’ interactional strategies with their young children.

Many studies have followed in this line of research to describe cultural differences in language socialization processes; most relevant to the current study are Blum-Kulka
(1997), which compared parent metapragmatic discourse in three cultural groups (Jewish Americans, Israeli Americans, and Israelis); work from Tulviste and colleagues and Ely and Gleason and colleagues that offer quantitative analyses of the patterns of different types of metapragmatic and metalinguistic talk in families of different cultural backgrounds (e.g., De Geer et al., 2002; Ely, Gleason, MacGibbon & Zaretsky, 2001).

Most often researchers interested in family metalanguage have investigated parents’ use of “metapragmatic” discourse, which was perhaps first considered in family mealtime talk in Blum-Kulka’s (1997) comparison of Jewish American, Israeli American, and Israeli families. Blum-Kulka identified three major types of metapragmatic comments (Silverstein, 1976). In this study, Jewish American families used more metapragmatic comments regarding discourse management (e.g., turn taking) and maxim violations (e.g., telling lies); Israeli families used more metalinguistic comments (talk about word meanings and comments topicalizing language); and American Israelis used the second most metalinguistic comments. Blum-Kulka attributed these findings to a variety of cultural and linguistic factors. In particular, and of relevance to the current study, is the finding that the higher number of metalinguistic comments in American Israeli families could be attributed to the reality of second language learning for the recent immigrants. In Israeli families, the language ecology of the environment was also seen to affect the amount of metalinguistic discourse produced. Further, Blum-Kulka characterized explaining word meanings to children to be a “favorite pastime” in the multilingual environment
of the Israeli family, suggesting that such types of talk were not only related to the cultural and linguistic background of the family but also to discourse activities in which family members engaged in a type of language play or discourse practice aimed at building rapport and providing entertainment for the family members.

Other studies have also found an advantage for the amount of metalinguistic talk in bilingual families. In a similar study comparing pragmatic socialization in Estonian, Finnish, and Swedish dinnertime conversations, De Geer et al. (2002) examined pragmatic socialization in 100 families residing in Estonia, Finland, and Sweden (including bilingual Estonian and Finnish families in Sweden). This study focused on the use of “comments” (defined as utterances with explicit or implicit aim to influence a conversational partner to behave or speak in a certain way [p. 1757]) in mealtime conversations. Comparisons were made between the cultural groups’ use of comments about table manners, moral and ethical behavior, and linguistic behavior (including turn regulation, maxim violations or metalinguistic comments). De Geer et al. found that non-linguistic behavior (table manners, moral and ethical behavior, prudential, and other behavior) was more in focus than linguistic behavior (Quantity, Quality, Relevance, Manner, Turn Taking, Metalinguistics). However, like Blum-Kulka (1997), this study found that most metalinguistic comments (defined here as concerning language and language use, word meanings, dialects, cross-linguistic comparison, etc.) occurred in the bilingual/bicultural family conversations and were provided by parents in order to correct or enrich children’s language use. The few metalinguistic comments produced in monolingual families were mainly provided by
the children, asking for word meanings either in their own language or in foreign languages (p. 1772).

In keeping with Blum-Kulka’s (1997) description of metalinguistic talk (as opposed to metapragmatic talk) as a “family pastime,” Ely et al. (2001) concluded that the prevalence of metalanguage in some family’s conversations might be attributed to a particular family style. Ely et al. did not find any age effects for parents’ use of any of the comments investigated (i.e. pragmatic, metalinguistic, and literate). Because the authors hypothesized that more metalanguage would be produced as children got older, this contradictory finding led the authors to conclude that, “the degree to which families talk about language is more a matter of family style…the rates with which speakers focus (or do not focus) on different aspects of language may reflect enduring individual and family styles rather than typical developmental patterns” (p. 369-370). In this chapter I look more closely at how metalinguistic talk serves other functions in addition to language learning in parent-child interactions by analyzing interactional patterns in the use of What is X? questions by children and looking more closely at the content of word definitions and explanations offered by parents in response to these questions.

What is X? questions
Heath’s (1982) work on children’s bedtime stories and parental scaffolding through the use of “What is X?” questions showed how the patterns of socialization and language learning in home interactions of middle-class families are continuous with what goes on at school. Such questioning patterns, found to be a part of everyday
interactions between parents and children in middle-class families, are similar to the
initiation-response-evaluation (IRE) sequence found in classroom discourse (Mehan,
1979). Heath concluded that children from such families are socialized into these
patterns before the age of two. In a discussion of this work, Gee (2008) also added
that higher-level academic tasks such as outlining and writing reports emulate the
What is X? format, and children who have learned these patterns early on will be
better equipped to engage in and accomplish such school tasks.

Children from middle-class families in the U.S. are also known to acquire the
What is X? question-answer format at an early age to engage parents and other adults
in conversation and elicit information in relation to their developmental level
(Chouinard, 2007), and question use declines as children get older (Smith, 1933).
However, for the children in the current study (ages six and four at the outset),
frequent use of What is X? questions also provide a way to initiate negotiation for
meaning, which is seen to be a primary route to second language acquisition (Gass &
Mackey, 2006; Long, 1996). Further, for older children, parental responses to What is
X? questions can go beyond simple naming or provision of a lexical item to
discussion and explanation of word meanings and cultural concepts (Blum-Kulka,
1997). Gee (2008) showed how word meanings are subjective and related to cultural
models of the speakers using the words. Children’s initiations of parents’ talk about
words and word meanings through the use of What is X? questions, then, can be seen
as an opportunity not only for language learning (through initiating lexical language-
related episodes as discussed above) but also as an opportunity to connect meanings with experiences and other knowledge connected with family ideologies.

Information requests in general can also function in interaction to place one speaker in a position of power over another. In speech act theory, information requests have been noted to function as directives where asking about something (e.g., Is it hot in here?) implies that something should be done (i.e. the heat turned off). Jones (2005) noted that questions play a role in forming discourse identities by placing the questioner in a position of power that requires the one being questioned to respond. When children direct “What is X?” questions to parents then, they take on the role of “seekers of information” or “language learners” who also control the flow of conversation and turn-taking patterns through the use of such questions.

In this chapter I examine how explicit, narrow instances of metalanguage centered around labeling and defining (i.e. lexical language-related episodes) fit into and help to construct a discourse mode or family conversational style in Family Two of the current study. I first consider how the What is X? questions the children use can be seen as a language learning strategy. I then analyze the turn-taking patterns involved in the What is X? question-answer sequence and show how initiating language-related episodes constitutes an interactional strategy associated with the social dynamics in the family. I examine longitudinal change that is evident in these patterns and specifically how parents change their strategies in response to these child patterns. Finally, I consider how What is X? questions lead to language-related episodes that provide opportunities for family identity building across times and
timescales. In conclusion, I argue that these patterns attest to the collaborative and co-construction nature of language socialization.

Methods

Data collection

Recording took place over eight months (November, 2005 to July, 2006) in Family Two, but only six months of data were returned. Kevin often relied on my scheduling post-recording interviews with him to prompt him to make the recordings, so in the one month that I was out of town due to a family emergency, he did not complete the recordings. An additional month was missed when the family took a vacation. The types of recordings returned by Family Two fell into three main categories: book-reading sessions (for pleasure), homeschool lessons, and mealtimes. Family Two preferred to record book reading and homeschool lesson sessions over family mealtimes. Table 5.3 shows the recordings returned by Family Two.
Several recording sessions did not fit neatly into one of the three categories: mealtime, book reading, or homeschool lesson. These included two sessions in which Arkadiy was reading a book with his father, but the focus was on reading skills – sounding out words and reading aloud – rather than reading for pleasure. These sessions were counted as homeschool lessons. In addition, two recordings involved other activities: making thank-you notes with oil pastels and practicing a skit to perform for their mother. These two sessions were omitted from the quantitative analysis of the data. The total amount of time recorded in each activity is shown in Table 5.2:
Not all family members were present at all recording sessions, as shown in Table 5.1. Meredith was the least frequent family member to participate in the recording sessions because of her work responsibilities. Kevin managed most of the recording times, often noting when he was beginning and ending recording sessions out loud to the other family members.

*Transcription*

Although many transcription conventions, including Tannen et al. (2007) code any utterance ending in a rising intonation with a question mark (see Schiffrin, 1994), I chose not to do this because of my interest in quantifying the number of questions asked by the children. I wanted to limit this analysis to interrogatives that began with wh- words or that explicitly functioned as requests (and not as exclamatory remarks). Prompts, specifically in homeschool lessons, where a statement was not completed by a parent (most often Kevin) but left for a child to finish were transcribed as an utterance ending with continuing intonation designated by a comma, (e.g., Kevin: “Be a,” Arkadiy: “Red leaf.”) regardless of the intonation pattern.

A subset of the transcripts was transcribed by a native-English speaking assistant who did not know Russian and verified by the researcher whose native language is English and speaks Russian as a second language.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Book reading</td>
<td>2:24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeschool</td>
<td>2:56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mealtime</td>
<td>2:58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>8:18</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Coding

The transcripts were initially coded for all instances of explicit metalanguage (including comments, directives, and reported speech) following the schema presented in Verschuren (2004). Because the current study focuses on interactional processes in the family conversations, and not simply the comparison of frequency of different types of metapragmatic and metalinguistic comments and directives in family conversations as in the studies reviewed above, a narrower area of analysis was warranted. This initial broad coding led to the identification of language-related episodes and lexical episodes in particular, primarily in response to children’s requests, as an area of analysis that would yield some insight onto interactional processes and longitudinal change in this family’s conversations. In the following sections I describe how I coded the data for both qualitative and quantitative analysis of lexical language-related episodes.

Language-related episodes were coded by utterance (as opposed to turn or episode). Every utterance within a language-related episode was given four codes, each of which is described separately below: (a) lexical language-related episode or not, (b) the speaker of the utterance, (c) the addressee of the utterance, and (d) the form of the utterance (i.e. interrogative or declarative). In addition, questions were coded as What is X? questions or not, and parental statements were coded as responses to children’s What is X? questions if they represented a second pair part or subsequent part of a continued response to a child’s What is X? question.
Lexical language-related episodes
Lexical language-related episodes were proposed by Fortune and Thorp (2001) as a more exact term for Kowal and Swain’s (1994) meaning-based language-related episodes. Because the current study also draws on discourse analytic work in language socialization, the definition of lexical language-related episodes in the current study includes in general explicit metalinguistic talk about what things are called and what words mean including types of talk that have been addressed in previous studies as: lexical language-related episodes (Fortune, 2005; Fortune & Thorp, 2001), meaning based language-related episodes (Kowal & Swain, 1994), explanatory discourse (Ninio & Snow, 1997), labeling (Ely et al., 2001), defining (Snow et al., 1987), and lexical negotiation (Cotterill, 2004). Coding for lexical talk was inspired by Jakobson’s (1985) “equational statements” (NP is NP) but also includes questions and statements formed with the following verbal constructions: “is when,” “is like,” “means,” “called,” “named.” The following types of talk were included as lexical language-related episodes:

- What something or someone is called, named or labeled: “What was her name?” “What is that called?” “Is a cherry a type of berry?”
- Information requests for numbers, time, place names, etc. that occur during homeschool lessons, “What time is that?” “Three plus three is what?”
- Equational statements that are formed with “that is”, e.g., “That’s a little of a sprout.”
• Utterances that provided or requested a referring term (label or name) for an object, person, place, or thing: “Her name was Maya,” “DC,” or “Who I was (in the game we played earlier)?”

• Information requests that queried word meanings, usually related to words in prior discourse (e.g., parents’ talk or text read from a book): “What is lavender?” “What does banter mean?”

• Statements that provided a word meaning or dealt with the semantic field of a word or phrase also constituted word talk, “One fell swoop means all at once”.

• Phrases such as “means,” “is when,” etc. ADJ is ADJ was coded as lexical talk, e.g., “Exuberant is happy,” if the goal was to provide a definition/synonym.

• Not included in the coding for word talk were predicate adjective constructions (NP is ADJ): “Ice is cold”.

• Questions read out loud from the text in a book were not included

• General or vague clarification requests that do not include repetition of prior discourse were not included, “Hmm?” “What?”

The interrater reliability score for the lexical language-related episode code was slightly lower than commonly accepted (Chronbach’s alpha = .76). This lack of agreement generally had to do with the ambiguity of whether an utterance had to do explicitly with language or not and is also related to the discourse context, i.e. naturalistic conversation rather than a language-learning task. “What is this?” for
example could mean, “What is this called?” or “I can’t tell what this is,” because it is not clearly visible, or it looks different than usual, etc. The researcher tended to take a more inclusive view due to the fact that all such utterances involved a speech act of naming something, whether that was the original intent or not. The second coder, however, took a more conservative approach. Discrepancies were discussed and agreed upon between the two coders.

**Speaker and addressee**

There were five possible codes for speaker and addressee, one for each family member and a fifth for “unknown,” which was also used for utterances seemingly addressed to the whole family. No other participants took part in the recording sessions.

**Form**

Each word talk utterance was coded for grammatical form or sentence type based on the terminating punctuation for the utterance in the transcript:

- Interrogative – Wh- questions, yes/no questions, and questions marked by rising intonation (does not include prompts where a parent waits for a child to complete an utterance, usually in a homeschool lesson – prompts are indicated with a comma at the utterance termination). Questions read from a book during book reading or lessons were not included.

- Declarative – Utterances terminating in a period, comma (continuing prosody), or with no punctuation (fragments, false starts)
What is X? questions

Questions were coded as What is X? questions if they took that exact form or one of several closely related forms (“What does X mean?” “What kind/type of X is that?” “What is that/this/it called?”). Because of the difficulty in determining if the question is about a concept or event, e.g., “What is that??!” stated with disbelief or excitement, or specifically about language, all questions that took this form were coded as What is X? questions unless some expressive intonation and the broader conversational context clearly marked the question as serving a different function. Interrater reliability for What is X? questions was established at a near perfect rate (Chronbach’s alpha = .92).

Parental response to children’s explicit metalinguistic questions

In addition, parents’ responses to a child’s request were coded if they represented a second or subsequent part or subsequent part (within the same parent turn) to a child’s What is X? question. All utterances in multi-utterance response were given this code (i.e. results indicating the number of utterances in response to a child’s question will reflect the length of the parent’s response turn).

Interview data and analysis

Kevin agreed to meet for regular interviews within one week after the recordings for each month were conducted, and Meredith participated in one of these monthly interviews. I asked general questions about the children’s language learning as well as Kevin’s own strategies for communicating and then asked Kevin to respond to two to three short prompts from that month’s recordings. Overall, about two hours
worth of interview data were collected and analyzed for this study (three interviews were lost due to problems with the recording equipment). Interviews were transcribed and coded emically using Grounded Theory Protocol (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) in Microsoft Word and Filemaker for major themes. Kevin offered perspectives on at least three aspects of interaction with his children: explicit error correction, expansion of child utterances, and the nature of the overall family discourse. He also discussed the decision to homeschool and his perspectives on that process over the course of the academic year. Taken together, attitudes on these themes pointed to a specific orientation that Kevin took regarding his role in his interactions with his children.

Findings

Parents’ perspectives

Kevin and Meredith were more explicitly oriented in interviews toward being “language models” for their children than facilitators; although there is evidence in the interactional data that they used implicit strategies for providing feedback to their children. In interviews, Kevin and Meredith indicated that they focused on providing a rich linguistic environment as a model for the children as can be seen in the following quote:

Kevin: They [other children] had things like “bestest” and stuff like this, six-year-old speak, and we were like, my god, you know our kids don't use this because they're in a controlled environment you know and their language is good.

(June 7, 2005)
Choosing to homeschool and center language learning in the home, then, reflected Kevin and Meredith’s beliefs that they could provide the best linguistic environment for Arkadiy and Anna.

Kevin and Meredith also suggested that they had negative feelings toward explicit correction, but as evident below, did indicate that they used implicit negative feedback such as recasts.

Kevin: But I never liked the idea of correcting people's grammar…

(lines omitted)

Meredith: …I really never stop them and say, …the pronouns should be like this. I would just rephrase it back. You know she says, “Us - us are going to the store.” I would say, “Yes, we're going to the store now”…

Kevin: Yeah, they'll pick it up, they'll pick it up.

(March 23, 2006)

In the following sections I will discuss how this orientation relates to the metalinguistic talk that occurs in Family Two’s interactions.

*What is X? questions as a learning strategy*

Lexical language-related episodes, or more specifically the What is X? question – response sequence, have a language learning function for Arkadiy and Anna when they initiate such talk in interaction with their parents. In the following two excerpts Arkadiy and Anna repeat or recycle the term they have queried, suggesting that they have at least temporarily learned the word and been able to use it in subsequent interaction. In the first example Excerpt 5.1, Arkadiy asks for the name
of an object in the immediate environment that is related to the topic of conversation
(the Christmas decorations the family had put around the house the day before).

Excerpt 5.1 Hot pads
(2D, 11/27/05, Arkadiy – 6, Anna – 4)

46  Arkadiy:  Mom, what do you call for cooking that thing?
47  Meredith:  Hot pads.
48  Arkadiy:  Yeh.
49  Anna:  [Mm]?
50  Arkadiy:  [The] Christmas ones.
51  Anna:  Hm?
52  Arkadiy:  Hot pads.

In the same mealtime conversation, Anna queries her mother’s use of the word
“wreath”.

Excerpt 5.2 Wreath
(2D, 11/27/05, Arkadiy – 6, Anna – 4)

158  Meredith:  No we don't put the - these decorations outside.
159  for the outside door . we have to make a wreath.
160  Which is something else we have to do this afternoon.
161  Anna:  What is wr -
162  Kevin:  Oh we're going to make one this year?
163  Meredith:  Mhmm.
164  Anna:  What is wreath?
Meredith: Making a handprint wreath.

Anna: What is wreath?

Meredith: A wreath is a - <pause> a circular . decoration that goes -

/??/?/ hang from doors during the Christmas season.

Anna: Uh huh.

Meredith: Mhm.

Anna: Yeh.

Anna: Mama?

Kevin: <laughs softly>.

Anna is able to appropriate the new word “wreath” from her mother’s previous utterance (line 159) and then recycle it in the form of a question in line 164, “What is wreath?” In these two examples, then, we see that What is X? questions afford some learning opportunities for the two children for acquiring new lexical items.

In addition to repeating or recycling lexical items, repetitions of chunks of parents’ definitions are also found in these data. In Excerpt 5.3, taken from a homeschool lesson, Arkadiy elicits a definition of the word “flashcards” from his father in line 839. (This is the second time Kevin has defined the word flashcards in this transcript).

Excerpt 5.3 What is flashcard?

(2A, 11/18/05, Arkadiy – 6)

Kevin: If you knew how to read, [then we wouldn't have to teach ya].

Arkadiy: [but, papa, /when - why/ you gonna
You said you gonna put

Kevin: Well, I think /you know/ next week I'm gonna do flashcards and some key words.

Arkadiy: What is flashcard?

Kevin: Flashcards is I'll hold up a card, and it'll have a word on it that you'll have to know, and you have to /be able to read it/, ok?

In a homeschool lesson some months later, Arkadiy appropriates (and approximates) this definition to explain why he is having trouble with the reading task in line 202.

Excerpt 5.4 Square card and pick it up thing

(2H, January, Arkadiy – 6)

Arkadiy: And

Kevin: In

Arkadiy: In

But you - but remember you haven't yet did .

some letters I don't know, you haven't put it in a square card and pick it up . thing?

Kevin: You're fine, big guy, what's this word?

Arkadiy: Remember you said [you were going to]?

Kevin: [Yes, and we have] done it.

Now come on, what's this one?
In this set of examples, Arkadiy in Excerpt 5.3, line 839 requests a definition of a word from Kevin and then recycles the definition in a later conversation as a type of communication strategy because he cannot remember, or chooses not to use, the word “flashcard.” This approximation serves a further discourse function, i.e. to complain about the lesson activities. In the following section I outline how What is X? questions in general functioned as an interactional strategy by the children to gain not only linguistic information but also turns at talk and attention from their parents.

**What is X? questions as an interactional strategy**

**Quantitative overview**

1,433 utterances out of 12,339 total utterances (or about 12%) in these recordings pertained to words, word meanings, what to call things, what people were named or how to refer to abstract concepts (such as telling time or recognizing words on a page). Broken down by activity, about 20% of the talk during homeschool lessons was coded as lexical talk, mainly attributable to the high frequency of What is X? question and response sequences that make up the IRE pattern noted in the lexical language-related episodes in these data. Mealtimes and book reading shared more similar frequencies with 9% and 8% respectively of each activity type devoted to lexical language-related episodes. In these settings, only conversational references to labels and word meanings were coded (although in some cases these included word play where the children asked about the names of characters in a dream or fantasy play [e.g., Anna: “Who I was?” Kevin: “You were Monster Count.”]). These numbers then represent the amount of time the family broke from other discourse
activities such as reading from a book, telling stories about the day or planning for events in the future to discuss language, and in particular, words.

There were differences across speakers for the amount and form of lexical language-related episodes used as well. Kevin was the most frequent speaker to engage in such talk with 15% of his total utterances coded as lexical talk, and this is no doubt related to his role as homeschool teacher where he was a frequent user of What is X? questions during the lessons. Arkadiy also engaged in frequent lexical talk (13% of all utterances), further indicating that participation in homeschool contributed to high frequencies of such talk. Meredith and Anna had 7% and 8% respectively for their total utterances. In general, then the amount of lexical talk produced by speaker depended on the activities in which the speakers participated rather than individual differences as those speakers who engaged in the same activities had similar rates of lexical talk.

In terms of who used the most What is X? questions, out of total opportunities to talk (total utterances), 3% of Kevin’s total talk were What is X? questions. The children produced roughly the same percentage of What is X? questions in relation to their total talk, about 2% each. Meredith was a less frequent user of What is X? questions (only four such questions were attributed to Meredith in the seven transcripts where she participates). Less than 1% of Meredith’s total talk took the form of What is X? questions.

Although Meredith produced less lexical talk than Kevin and was a less frequent user of What is X? questions, both at mealtimes and in book-reading
sessions, she played a role in the production of What is X? questions and language-related episodes by the other speakers. In the mealtimes where Meredith was present (2C, 2D, 2F, and 2R) more than twice the number of lexical talk utterances was addressed to Meredith (18%) in comparison to Kevin (7%), a finding that I will discuss in detail below. The children were the main recipients of lexical talk in these transcripts, 56% of all such utterances were addressed to either Arkadiy or Anna (the addressee of the remaining 19% was undetermined). However, much of this talk was in response to child questions, suggesting that the children played a primary role in eliciting such talk in the family conversations. Meredith produced lexical talk in response to children’s questions 60% of the time, at a slightly higher rate than Kevin who did so 48% of the time. In sum, then at mealtimes when all the family members are home, the children selected Meredith more frequently to clarify lexical items and she took more reactive position in this type of talk than Kevin, who was more proactive. In the following section I will provide a qualitative analysis to examine how lexical talk functions in the mealtime data and what might explain this interactional pattern.

Interactional pattern of What is X? questions
In the two excerpts given above (5.1 and 5.2), we see that the children requested labels or definitions from their mother (“hot pads” and “wreath”). In the first excerpt, Arkadiy selects his mother specifically (Kevin is in the room) and in the second Anna responds to her mother’s talk with a definition request. In terms of setting up an interactional pattern in the family conversations, then we can view these
types of lexical talk elicitations by the children as a means for selecting their mother as interlocutor which excludes the other two members (father and other child) from the conversation and, if successful, focuses Meredith’s attention on the child’s problem (i.e. what to call something or what a word means). The effect of the What is X? question on the participant constellation in Family Two’s mealtime interactions can be seen in Figure 5.1

Figure 5.1: Changing participant constellation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Possible constellations pre-question</th>
<th>Constellation post-question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whole family</td>
<td>Whole family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>Father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child A</td>
<td>Child B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child B</td>
<td>What is X?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Child B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Child A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Recruiting Meredith’s attention as interlocutor was important for Arkadiy and Anna perhaps because they spent less time with her than they did with Kevin, who was a stay-at-home dad. There are examples in the data of Arkadiy and Anna getting exciting and interrupting other activities when mom arrives home and asking her about why she has to go to work on Monday. In some cases Arkadiy and Anna can be seen to compete in vying for Meredith’s attention through the use of alternating What is X? questions as in excerpt 5.4.

Excerpt 5.4: Corn

(2D, November, 2005; Arkadiy – 6 yrs., Anna – 4 yrs.)
Arkadiy: Mama, will /mom/ make anymore calahndars <calendars> because we have that one?

Meredith: Yeh we'll just have to . finish it.

Anna, use a fork.

Uhm, we'll take - . once it's [December]

Anna: [What is this]?

Kevin: Corn.

Come on, eat.

Anna: [What]?

Arkadiy: [Mama]?

Kevin: Just eat little girl.

Anna: /???

Arkadiy: Mama?

What kind number is December?

Meredith: December is the last month of the year.

Kevin: The month twelve.

Meredith: And, the calendar there is to count down how many days [from the first day of decem -

Anna: [Remember we went

Meredith: I – [I'm talking right now].

Kevin: [/???

Meredith: From the first day of December until the twenty-fifth of
December

which is Christmas.

Christmas is the twenty-fifth of December.

Anna: Mama mama?

Meredith: Yes.

Anna: You know what?

This is corn.

Meredith: Yes.

I know that.

Anna: You know what mama?

I like the red thing.

What is that called?

Meredith: Cranberry.

Do you want some more?

In this lunchtime recording, the family is eating Thanksgiving leftovers and planning to decorate the house for Christmas (as indicated in the discussion of the calendar that counts the days to Christmas) later that day. Arkadiy asks Meredith a question in line 475 about calendars, and Meredith responds in line 476 but then initiates a side sequence with Anna about table manners, “Anna, use a fork.” She then returns to the conversation with Arkadiy, but Anna interrupts with a What is X? question, “What is this?” (line 479). Kevin intervenes in an effort to focus Anna on eating and not talking (a rule that is repeated across mealtime transcripts in this family) and responds
for Meredith, “Corn. Come on, eat.” (lines 480-481). Anna makes an unintelligible statement in line 482, and Arkadiy reinitiates his conversation with Meredith with another What is X? question in line 487, “What kind number is December?” Meredith starts to explain, Anna interrupts with a narrative opener, “Remember we went,” Meredith stops Anna, “I’m talking right now,” and continues her explanation in response to Arkadiy. When Meredith has completed this turn, Anna jumps in again and this time recycles the word she has learned earlier, corn, with an equational statement, “This is corn.” Meredith does little to acknowledge the contribution, and Anna tries again with a related food topic, “I like the red thing,” and What is X? “What is it called?” question.

The What is X? questions in this excerpt provide a means for Arkadiy and Anna to enter into conversation with Meredith, and both children repeat this strategy when they lose their turn at talk with her (Lines 479, 487, 505). There are several possible motivating factors for this strategy. The first, which is evident in comparing Meredith’s spontaneous initiations of lexical talk to Kevin’s, is that Meredith might be less attuned to the children’s language competencies because she does not spend as much time with them on a daily basis (Gleason, 1975) and therefore does not explain herself as frequently as Kevin. Her more complex or less familiar discourse could create a need for Arkadiy and Anna to query what she says more often. The What is X? question then provides the children not only a means to select their mother as interlocutor but also to negotiate the conversational level by requiring Meredith to stop what she is talking about and provide an explanation (as seen in the wreath...

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example from Excerpt 5.2). Ely et al. (2001) noted that metalinguistic comments were often an ends to themselves that drew interlocutors’ attention to language, rather than altering behaviors (such as turn-taking).

Another possibility is that the children have learned the What is X? interactional strategy from their parents. Heath (1982) showed how middle-class parents engage language-learning children in this kind of scaffolded discourse in storybook reading, and this structure has been found in higher-level school tasks such as outlining and writing reports (Gee, 2008). Most of the lexical language-related episodes in these data occur as elicitations and responses during lesson time where Kevin prompts Arkadiy, “Ok, what is that?” and Arkadiy responds. This suggests that perhaps the strategy is co-opted by the children from one activity setting to another; however, Meredith herself does not produce a lot of interactive lexical talk in other activities such as book reading as will be discussed below.

As for the function of What is X? questions and their responses, I have discussed above how they can provide language-learning opportunities for the children and how they serve to command attention and control, or at least negotiate, the participant constellation of the conversation. In addition, these types of requests can give Meredith (and Kevin) clues about what the children know and don’t know and what types of information (e.g., explanations of word meanings) the children need to engage in conversation. In this way, the What is X? questions issued by Arkadiy and Anna provide a site of reverse socialization where the parents are trained to recognize problem spots in the discourse and, over time, anticipate What is X?
questions by providing explanations of words. In keeping with this conjecture, over
the eight months of the study there is some evidence that Meredith’s strategies in
anticipating and responding to What is X? questions changes over time.

*Contrastive analysis of Meredith’s early and late book-reading styles*

Because lexical language-relate episodes in Family Two were more frequent
in certain activities than others (i.e. homeschool vs. book-reading and mealtimes) and
when certain speakers (Meredith) were present, it was hard to determine from the data
set how much quantitative change there was in this type of talk and pattern of
interaction over the eight months of the study. In this section I will provide a
contrastive qualitative analysis of the children’s elicitations of lexical talk and
Meredith’s provision of such talk in the early and late book-reading transcripts to
show how the children’s growing competencies and repeated elicitations influence
Meredith’s own strategies. I compare two book-reading sessions: an early one
(transcript 2E, December, 2005) where Meredith and Arkadiy read a total of four
books (*The Tale of Benjamin Bunny*, *The Tale of Mr. Todd*, *Did I Ever Tell You How
Lucky You Are*, and *The Rescuers*) in a one-hour recording session (the longest in the
data set) and a later one (2Q, June, 2006) where Meredith reads two books to Arkadiy
and Anna together, *The Lady and the Lark* and *Anyushka’s Voyage*. In general,
interaction during book reading with Meredith is primarily child-directed through the
use of interruptions and questions, and this does not change across the two transcripts
analyzed here. However, changes in Meredith’s readiness to provide definitions (or
elaboration) both in anticipation of problem spots or in response to other, more
complex, types of questions such as general clarification requests suggest that she has changed her strategies to accommodate to the children. In this way we see how children can socialize parents and how socialization processes are bidirectional.

In interviews Meredith stated that she preferred to “read it as it is” without being interrupted during book reading. This preference is in line with the fact that in both the early and late book-reading sessions, Meredith produced no What is X? questions. However, Meredith does provide word definitions during these recordings, usually in response to Arkadiy and Anna’s questions. In the first 50 lines of the early book-reading session, Arkadiy asks three questions about word meanings in the text of the book, two of which are found in Excerpts 5.5 and 5.6 below:

Excerpt 5.5: Bonnet

10 Meredith: A gig was coming along the road.
11 It was driven by Mr. McGregor and beside him sat Mrs. McGregor in her best bonnet.
12 Arkadiy: What is /bomet/?
13 Meredith: Bonnet is like a hat that ladies wear.
14 Arkadiy: Ok.

Excerpt 5.6: Lavender

24 Meredith: She also sold herbs and rosemary tea and rabbit tobacco.
Which is what we call lavender.
25 Arkadiy: What is lavender?
In these two excerpts, Arkadiy’s What is X? questions interrupt the flow of the story reading, and Meredith responds with some hesitations, drawing out vowels, and hedging that indicate she is engaging in the language-related episodes with some difficulty. There is also indication in the first 50 lines (though not in these excerpts) that she does not want to be interrupted (she ignores a repeated clarification request about a word, “Tale?” three times from Arkadiy, but finally provides a definition of tale when he rephrases the question as ‘What is tale?’).

In the first 50 lines of this early book-reading session, Meredith provides one word definition on her own, without elicitation from Arkadiy:

Excerpt 5.7: Tam o’ shanter

48    Meredith:    Peter's coat and shoes were plainly to be seen on the scarecrow topped with an old tam o’ shanter of Mr. McGregors.

49    /That's that kind of hat/.

51    Little Benjamin said it spoils people's clothes to squeeze under a gate.

Here Meredith anticipates the need for clarification and provides a definition without the child prompt. The fact that this is a definition of a type of hat, the same kind of
definition request in the bonnet excerpt above, further indicates that Arkadiy is “training” Meredith to become attuned to the type of information he needs.

In contrast, the first 50 lines of the later book-reading transcript in June contain only one lexical talk utterance, and this utterance is a definition produced by Meredith without elicitation from the children, “A lark is a kind of bird,” in line 11 of Excerpt 5.7.

Excerpt 5.7: Opening in 2Q

9 Meredith: Once upon a time a merchant asked his three daughters what he should bring them from the city.

10 The first asked for pearls the second for gold, but the youngest longed for a singing lark.

11 A lark is a kind of bird.

In addition to fewer What is X? questions at the outset of the story-reading (which could also be related to the vocabulary used in the Peter Rabbit series) and greater anticipation of problem spots by Meredith in the later session, there is also a change in the overall question-answer sequences that were coded as lexical talk. Most notably, book reading becomes more interactive in the later session as the children focus their questions on the plot of the story and not just the literal meanings of words. As their linguistic competence has increased, so has their ability to understand and engage with the story. This engagement coincides with Meredith’s increased anticipation of the need for providing word definitions.

Excerpt 5.8 The griffin
Ride my griffin there and distract the dragons the lion
overcome her.

When the dragon falls they'll both return to human form.

Take your husband on to the griffin at once do not delay or
you will not escape her.

Meredith: <whisper> That's the griffin.

Anna: Why.

Is he a bad bird?

Arkadiy: But how would - is he going to fight?

<some overlap, hard to tell who is talking>

Meredith: This - this type of bird here is called a griffin.

So it has wings, and it has . a bird's head, but then it has a
body like a lion.

Arkadiy: But mama?

Is he going to fight?

Meredith: /Well let's/ see.

In line 126 here, Meredith initiates a side sequence from the regular text to talk about
the illustration in the book, “That’s the griffin.” Anna responds, “Why?” and there is
some discussion about what kind of bird the griffin is, “Is he a bad bird?” and what he
is going to do, “Is he going to fight?” While Arkadiy and Anna seem to be referring to
the complicating action of the storyline, i.e. what is the griffin going to do and why
(perhaps because he’s bad), Meredith responds with a definition of griffin in lines 131-132 “This type of bird here is called a griffin…”. Arkadiy responds to this definition by asking a question about the plot, “Is he going to fight?” This contrasts with the repeated response of “ok” that Arkadiy gives to Meredith’s definitions in the earlier transcript.

For the children then, the confusion and discussion in lines 128-130 about the griffin seem more about who the griffin is in this story (i.e. a local, contextualized meaning of “griffin”) and not so much about what a griffin is (i.e. a global, decontextualized meaning of the word). Although the ability to produce decontextualized definitions have been correlated with higher literacy skills (Snow et al., 1987), here, the interest in the griffin and his actions in the storyworld indicates greater understanding of the book plot and ability to engage with the reading than the “question-response-ok” sequence seen above in the earlier session. Meredith, however, responds to the confusion over the griffin with a definition (as opposed to answering the question, “Is he a bad bird?”), which suggests she has come to interpret problems or communication breakdowns as related to lack of linguistic knowledge.

In the later book-reading session, What is X? questions are not as frequent even though Arkadiy and Anna use other types of clarification requests. What is X? questions are unambiguous openers for lexical language-related episodes in the sense that the object of the query is explicit (I want to know what this is, what it is called, what it means, etc.) and therefore, as we have seen, elicit a specific type of talk from the interlocutor (i.e. a referring term or definition). More complex question forms
such as “What does that mean?” “What are they talking about?” and “Do you know how they do that?” that Arkadiy uses in the later transcript make the object of inquiry more ambiguous (i.e. is the issue one of not knowing what a word means, such as “prayer,” or is it truly an information request about the actions/events in the storybook)? The fact that Meredith responds to these types of questions with definitions rather than discussions about the events in the book suggests that she has learned to some extent to expect the source of a negotiation or problem to be linguistic in nature. This is more obvious in situations where Meredith misinterprets Arkadiy’s question, as in Excerpt 5.14.

Excerpt 5.12: Enchantress
(2Q, June, 2005, Arkadiy – 7, Anna – 4)

156  Arkadiy: [Mama]
157    Mama can you,
158  Meredith: W -
159  Arkadiy: because - because,
160    who's this?
161  Meredith: The enchantress.
162  Arkadiy: Who -
163  Anna: And that is her?
164  Arkadiy: What - what is entrantress?
165  Meredith: Enchantress is like a kind witch, or wizard.
166  Arkadiy: What does it do?
Meredith: Casts magic.

Spells.

Arkadiy: No what - what does that one for, to marry him?

Meredith: No she was the one that - she wanted to marry the prince, but he refused.

And so then, she made him into a lion by day and a –

human by night.

Here Arkadiy uses a What is X? questions in line 164, “What is enchantress?” but then revises it two times “What does it do?” and “What does that one for, to marry him?” The revisions, which occur in response to Meredith’s definitions, indicate a negotiation over these responses and increasing specification of the type of response Arkadiy is seeking. By finally including the phrase “to marry him,” he is able to elicit enough information from Meredith about the plot and characters of the story, indicated by Arkadiy’s lack of further elicitation or response. As in the above example, we see here that when Arkadiy asks, “What is enchantress?” he means “in this story” and not “what does the word enchantress mean?” These patterns suggest that as Arkadiy’s English language competence increased, he is able to engage with the story more. Arkadiy’s ultimate goal, it seems, was not to know what the word “enchantress” means, but rather to know what this enchantress was doing in this book; however, he uses the “What is enchantress” question to introduce this discussion with Meredith. As in the mealtime data discussed above, the What is X? question serves as a resource for Arkadiy to gain Meredith’s attention and introduce a new topic.
A change can also be found in the form of Meredith’s definitions, which is also likely related to the children’s development of language competence. Meredith responds to Arkadiy’s “What is X?” questions in the early book-reading session with usually a one-utterance, syntactically complete definition (e.g., “Lavender is an herb, it shows some right here, and it smells very nice” or “He’s an albatross. Which is a very large bird that flies over the ocean.”) These definitions sometimes included pauses and false starts as though she was thinking of how to phrase the definition in a way that Arkadiy would understand. In contrast, responses to wh-questions in the later book-reading session are much shorter, often consisting of only two synonyms produced in two intonational contours as though the first synonym is given and then pause for a confirmation check and then an additional synonym, “Enchantress is like a kind of witch, or wizard.”; “Casts magic. Spells.”; “Trip. Journey”; “Huge. Bigger than huge.” The shortening of her definitions and provision of synonyms instead of longer explanations for definitions, suggests that the children have more linguistic resources to draw on in the later reading session and, as Jakobson (1985) suggested in pointing out the importance of equational statements in language learning, can use one referring term to explicate another.

Language-related episodes and the co-construction of family identity

In the previous sections I have discussed What is X? questions as a language learning strategy and an interactional strategy and have shown how in one particular context (i.e. book-reading with mom) lexical language-related episodes change over time. In this section I argue that these same language-related episodes, i.e. talk about
what things are called or the meanings of words, also play an important social role in interaction as they afford members in the internationally adoptive family a chance to connect their individual experiences and histories and shape a cultural model through discourse that contributes to the co-construction of a family identity.

The first two months of recording for Family Two took place during November and December during which the family celebrated both Thanksgiving and Christmas. As the children had arrived the previous year in early December, this was their first Thanksgiving in the United States. This holiday provided the topic of an extended discussion in transcript 2C.

Excerpt 5.15: Holiday
(2C, November, 2005; Arkadiy – 6 yrs., Anna – 4 yrs.)

33 Anna: Mama?
34 What?
35 Why tomorrow's holiday?
36 /*?/?/.
37 Meredith: Tomorrow's Thanksgiving.
38 Anna: What?
39 But Thanksgiving is holiday.
40 Meredith: Yes.
41 Kevin: Yeh.
42 Meredith: A holiday is a special day like Christmas or,
43 Anna: Mom, what is [tomorrow day]?
((Arkadiy interrupts - definition of sprout))

55 Anna: Why /tomorrow’s/ hol - what’s tomorrow day called?

56 Kevin: /Now/ what would you say, Anna?:

57 Anna: What is tomorrow?

58 Anna: Holiday.

61 Meredith: What holiday?

62 Arkadiy: Thanksgiving.

64 Anna: What is the name of the morning?

65 Meredith: Thursday.

66 Anna: Thursday.

In this excerpt the language-related episode, which is introduced by Anna in a series of wh- questions, centers around explaining a concept of immediate importance, i.e. the fact that tomorrow is a holiday and Thanksgiving and Thursday. Tomorrow is a holiday and Thanksgiving, which means that Anna will not go to school the next day and the family will celebrate. Tomorrow is also Thursday, a fact of importance to Anna who is learning the days of the week. In the next mealtime transcript (2D), which was recorded a few days after this one, in fact, Anna asks at the opening of the recording “But what is today?” and Meredith responds immediately with the day of the week.

Later in the same mealtime (Excerpt 5.16), Anna asks a more information-oriented question about Thanksgiving, “And . mama, we ever have Thanksgiving?”
(line 591) that links the term/event to the children’s experiences. Through this line of questioning, Thanksgiving becomes further narrowed to “your first Thanksgiving” in line 594.

Excerpt 5.16: No fruit day

586 Anna: Papa, Miss Karen said tomorrow's no fruit day.
587 Kevin: Right.
588 Because no one's going to be there.
589 Meredith: 'Cause tomorrow's Thanksgiving.
590 Anna: Yeh.
591 [And mama, we ever have] Thanksgiving?
592 Meredith: [And miss Karen and Miss Trish have to /have/ Thanksgiving].
593 Anna: /No/.
594 Meredith: /??/ your first Thanksgiving.

The topic of the first thanksgiving evolves into a story about last Thanksgiving as we see here in lines 602 - 613:

602 Meredith: [This is your first].
603 Kevin: [This is your first] Thanksgiving guys.
604 Meredith: You haven't been here one year yet.
605 Last year. on Thanksgiving. you were in the detskiy dom <orphanage>.
606 Anna: You /used to/ Thanksgiving.
Meredith: And we were thinking about you because we had already seen you one time.

Arkadiy: And you were thinking how you were going to pick us up?

Meredith: And we were thinking that next year, you would be here for Thanksgiving.

And now you are.

Anna: Now we're here [all the time].

Kevin: [/You're right/].

Anna: But now we're your daughter and son!

Anna’s original question about what tomorrow day is called in the opening of this mealtime evolves into a discussion about the children’s lives in the United States and the experiences of the family together. The questions Anna poses to her mother, which are all in some way related to the significance of tomorrow (that it is a holiday, Thanksgiving, no fruit day, etc.), allow for an opportunity to connect the one-time significance of this Thanksgiving (i.e. that there will not be school tomorrow) to the longer timescale of the children’s lives prior to their arrival in the U.S. Meredith then expands on this topic in lines 605 – 610, first locating the children in a different place, the detskiy dom (or Russian orphanage), and then referring to herself and Kevin as parents waiting for their children. Through this orientation sequence, Meredith constructs their lives as a family together as beginning prior to the children’s arrival as they planned for the children before they came. In addition, the meaning of
“Thanksgiving” takes on greater significance as being “here” for Thanksgiving means being “your daughter and son,” as Anna states in line 613. In the following lines, the family further co-constructs the meaning of the holiday in relation to being a family.

Excerpt 5.17: Thanksgiving forever

616 Meredith: Now you're here all the time and not just for Thanksgiving.
617 Anna: Thanksgiving for /every/ gonna have Thanksgiving!
618 Arkadiy: Uhm, not for /every/.
619 Meredith: It's just one day.
620 Kevin: But it'll come around next year.
621 Meredith: Yep, next year we'll have Thanksgiving again.
622 Anna: Whoo.
623 Anna: So I was right?

Anna suggests that she will have Thanksgiving forever (now that she is a member of the family) (line 617). In this way the repeated celebration of a culturally specific holiday helps to define what it means to be “daughter and son” in the new family. The two concepts are intertwined here in the defining of Thanksgiving. In this episode we have seen how reference to a concept of immediate relevance and need for explanation of “What is tomorrow/Thanksgiving/holiday?” connected the past experiences of children and parents (from being in the orphanage and waiting for the children’s arrival) to projecting into the future (about celebrating Thanksgiving.
forever). Lexical language-related episodes allowed the family members a chance to build a model of what Thanksgiving meant to them as an individual family, a representation of a place and time when they were apart and thinking of one another to the projection of a long-lasting relationship that was characterized by the repetition of an annual event, Thanksgiving. Here we see how language learning, interaction, and identity construction coincided in the discourse practices of this adoptive family.

Conclusions

As noted in Chapter 1, we often think of socialization as something experts do to novices (parents socialize children, teachers socialize students). Here we see instances of metalanguage introduced by children that in some ways initiate socialization to meet their needs. The language socialization processes associated with language-related episodes in Family Two can be seen as collaborative with parents and children influencing one another simultaneously. Kevin and Meredith suggested in interviews that they saw themselves as language models, and this approach perhaps kept the general level of conversation between family members fairly complex although Kevin and Meredith did use some implicit feedback in interaction. Arkadiy and Anna then needed ways to enter into conversation with limited linguistic resources. Their use of What is X? questions can be seen as one such strategy that allowed them access the family discourse.

Kevin and Meredith engage in these child-initiated language-related episodes as a form of rapport building (perhaps associated with their education level and professional interests as lawyers are known to engage in “lexical negotiation” as part
of their professional practice [Cotterill, 2004]) and this further constructs these types of episodes as characteristic of the family discourse. The process is in some ways cyclical with family members influencing each other over time. For the parents of international adoptees who enter the home with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, part of the socialization process is finding out what the children know and don’t know, what they understand, and how they learn. For the children, the process is slightly different, how to gain access to information, how to be ratified as a participant or member in the new family, and how to understand new events, objects, and even words in the new environment. These processes work together, and they result in local, personal family discourse practices that serve to construct meaning, relationships, and understandings of the world.

Previous work on metalanguage in family discourse identified metalinguistic talk as part of a family style (Ely et al., 2001) or a family pastime (Blum-Kulka, 1997). This study has contributed to this understanding by elaborating on how elicitation of language-related episodes (in the form of What is X? questions) in conversational interactions served both language learning and interactional functions. At the same time that the children were obtaining important linguistic information (in the form of labels or definitions from their parents), they also negotiated the conversational level and gained turns at talk. What is X? questions as an interactional strategy, then, were found to play an important role in engaging the mother in Family Two who worked outside of the home in conversation. Further, over time and as the children developed linguistically, Meredith’s own strategies for providing preemptive
elaborated input were seen to change as she anticipated problem spots and interpreted
children’s questions as a need for lexical talk. The final function that language-
related episodes played in Family Two was opening the family conversation to talk
that allowed for co-construction of word meanings and, subsequently, world views
and family identities. As the parents and children collaborated in arriving at a
meaning of a word, they connected their past experiences across times and timescales
to make sense of their new lives together. In this way, for this particular family,
language-related epidodes were a central part of how they learned about one another,
how they interacted, and how they made sense of their lives.
Chapter 6: ‘They’ll help us speak English, and we’ll help them in Russian’:

Language negotiation in Family Three

This chapter focuses on the use of Russian by members of Family Three, The Goellers, which was comprised of six Russian-speaking adoptees who had been adopted in waves (three pairs of biological siblings over a period of four years) by parents Melanie and Paul. Each adoption in Family Three (re)introduced Russian into the family interactions, and in this chapter I focus on how language choice between Russian and English is negotiated by family members through code-switching strategies in the adjustment period immediately after the arrival of Lesya (15) and Lena (16), the two oldest children in the Goeller family and the last of six to be adopted. Unlike the other two families who participated in this study, data collection in Family Three began a few weeks before Lesya and Lena arrived and continued for eight months. Tracing the first months together as a family allowed for a glimpse of the fascinating initial period as the family established new routines and ways of interacting.

As discussed in the opening chapters, studies of international adoptees of different ages from different cultural backgrounds often report attrition of so-called “birth” languages or first languages (e.g., Glennen & Bright, 2005; Isurin, 2000; Nicoladis & Grabois, 2002), and the children from Families One and Two in this study at the time of data collection also had limited contact with, and therefore made little use of, Russian in their daily lives. In Family Three, however, Russian was
“revitalized” and then maintained in the family conversations even eight months after the newcomers’ arrival. In this chapter I examine code-switching phenomena in Family Three’s data that are specifically related to negotiation of language choice between family members to understand how Russian is maintained at least for this initial period and how English and Russian occupy different domains in the family conversations over time. I conclude that the arrival of Lesya and Lena is a socializing force for the whole family as the negotiation of the use of Russian in family interactions leads to not only increased use of Russian at least for the initial period for all speakers, but also to the establishment of new personal relationships between parents and siblings and construction of bilingual identities for some of the family members.

Code-switching is often defined as the “use of more than one language in the course of a single communicative episode” (Heller, 1988, p. 1). For the analysis of code mixing in Family Three’s data, I employ a conversational code-switching approach (Auer, 1984, 1998) that emphasizes the sequential nature of switching in bilingual conversation. More specifically, I draw on Auer’s notion of language negotiation sequences in which participants actively negotiation the language of interaction to show a) how an English-language context of interaction is negotiated between the parents and new arrivals over the eight months and b) how a Russian-language context of interaction is negotiated between the new arrivals and at least two of their siblings during the same time period. Although the family shifts from more Russian use to more English use at mealtime in the seven months after Lesya and
Lena’s arrival, in this chapter I show how the children are able to maintain Russian by narrowing its functions and using bridging strategies (such as translations to English) to include the whole family. I conclude that these processes represent ways in which the entire family collaborates to construct family discourse practices that contribute to identity construction in the family. In the following sections I provide an overview of conversational approaches to code-switching and justification for this approach for analyzing bilingual language use in the setting of the internationally adoptive family. I then discuss Auer’s (1984, 1998) participant-related code-switching and language negotiation sequences in specific. Finally, I consider how a language socialization approach to examining the process of negotiation of language choice over time in the bilingual family can further enhance our understanding of the interactional processes associated with such negotiations as well as processes of language shift and maintenance known to occur within the family sphere (see for example discussion in King, Fogle, & Logan-Terry, 2008).

**Literature Review**

*Language choice and family bilingualism*

Language choice in bilingual families and specifically the maintenance of a minority language has been tied to a wide range of factors, including family members’ beliefs about language; ethnic, religious, or national identities; economic change and globalization, and exposure to schooling among other factors (Fishman, 2001; King, 2001; Spolsky, 2004). A broader body of research has identified code-switching as a wide-spread linguistic practice within bilingual families and communities (Auer,
1984, 1998; Zentella, 1997). In a ten-year study of language socialization and code-switching practices in a Puerto Rican neighborhood of New York City (El Barrio), for example, Zentella (1997) found that frequent code-switching and the use of a mixed code “Spanglish” were markers of an in-group Nuyorican identity. Children were exposed to both Spanish and English in their home lives, and Zentella concluded that, “the frequent interspersal of sentences and words from both languages was the primary symbol of membership in el bloque and reflected the children’s dual cultural identification” (p. 79). Although being able to speak both Spanish and English were important in this community, Zentella also documented the dominance of English in El Barrio as the language of schooling and the larger city context. There were signs of language shift toward English in the Puerto Rican community, primarily in parents’ unwillingness to require children to address them in Spanish and the widespread use of English in children’s activities (p. 77). However, the practice of code-switching in this study was integral to being an “in-group” member of the community.

In presumably less stable bilingual settings where community norms are not established or speakers from different ethnicities and backgrounds interact in two or more languages, code-switching practices are more likely tied to the construction of local meanings such as the negotiation and ascription of participant identities (Cashman, 2005). The three internationally adoptive families in this study were not part of a minority language community where two languages were commonly spoken and were therefore not regularly exposed to the practice of code-switching. Communities of Russian bilinguals exist in nearly every major metropolitan area of
the United States (including a sizable population in the Washington, DC metro area), and these communities have code-switching and language mixing practices that have been documented in research (Andrews, 1999; Angermeyer, 2005). However, internationally adoptive families, as I have reported in prior work (e.g., Fogle, 2006) tend to have little contact with these communities. While adoptive parents might speak some Russian and attend Russian cultural events at local churches or embassies, they do not often use Russian outside of interactions with their children or socialize with Russian American families in the area. Models for Russian-English code-switching such as those associated with the Nuyorican identity of El Barrio (Zentella, 1997), while potentially present in the larger Russian community in the United States, are not readily available to adoptive parents and adoptees. The use of both languages in the family sphere, however, can still play a role in identity construction for internationally adoptive families as family members find a way to maintain Russian against the external (and internal) pressures of English as I will show in the data from Family Three.

Conversational code-switching

Auer (1984, 1998) proposed an approach to code-switching based on conversation analysis methodology in which code-switching is studied as a contextualization cue used in the sequential organization of talk. Auer (1984) views this “interactional” approach to code-switching as falling between the “grammatical,” which is concerned with the forms of switches, and the “sociolinguistic,” which is
concerned with macro issues of community language choice (where and why a language is used). Auer argues that simply looking toward societal patterns of language status will not explain why each language is used when in conversation because code-switching is locally produced and the choice of language in and of itself serves to contextualize the local interaction. That is, switching languages adds to the meaning of an utterance and its interpretation by an interlocutor by “providing cues for the organization of the ongoing interaction (i.e., is it discourse related) or about attributes of the speaker (participant related)” (Auer, 1984, p. 12). Discourse related code-switching according to Auer, “interrupts conversational continuity in order to set off something that has been said before against something that will be said now” (p. 93). Participant related code-switching, “redefines the language of interaction” in order to make note of a speaker’s unbalanced bilingual competence or a divergence in language preferences between two speakers (p. 93). The interactional approach to code-switching also allows for the study of the processes of language negotiation and code selection, which can then be connected to larger macro sociolinguistic processes.

In Auer’s (1984) study of Italian-German bilingual children, for example, language negotiation (where code-switching was triggered by a self-repair) overwhelmingly moved from Italian to German. Auer (1998) suggested that this pattern was indicative of facts about the children’s “‘larger’ (ethnographically recoverable) life-world” (p. 5) and that the conversational interactions indexed the larger macrosociolinguistic environment of these children at the same time that they construct it. In this study I incorporate both the older children’s and the parents’
perspectives on language use and learning in the family to understand the processes of language negotiation that occur and how they connect with the family member’s language attitudes and beliefs. Certainly English is a major force in Family Three’s home life: it is the dominant language of all of the family members except Lesya and Lena, it is the dominant language of the community, and it is important for schooling and social life. However, Lesya and Lena are able to maintain the use of Russian in the family conversations over a longer period of time than the other adoptees in Families One and Two without much external community support. This maintenance of Russian, I argue below, is related to their negotiation strategies in conversation and their attitudes toward their native language.

Language negotiation and identity construction

Language negotiation sequences are defined by Auer (1998) as “those stretches of talk in which participants do not agree on one common language-of-interaction” (p. 8). Auer identified sequences where speakers abandoned transepisodic preferences (i.e. the preferred language of interaction for that individual speaker across conversational episodes) to switch into an interlocutor’s dominant or preferred language. These negotiations, he suggests,

Allow participants to ascribe to each other *individualistic preferences* for one language or the other. This is probably typical for a sociolinguistic context in which situation or co-participant specific ‘norms’ on language use are weak or too instable to be employed to account for the opponents’ behaviour in language negotiation sequences” (Auer, 1984, p. 47).
Cashman (2005) follows in this vein by expanding the notion of ascription of “individualistic preferences” to show how certain identity-related categories could also be ascribed through negotiations of language choice and how code-switching could serve to comment on other members’ language competence and in-group status in interaction. Rather than taking a “language reflects society view,” Cashman finds that different identities are talked into being at the micro level. Such negotiations have also been tied to the construction of power relations amongst children (Cashman, 2008; Jørgensen, 1998) as well as individual ethnic membership within bilingual family interactions (Pasquandrea, 2008).

In terms of language learning and bilingual language competence, Lanza (2004) found that children’s language preferences (or language dominance) could be negotiated by parents through certain interactional strategies. Specifically, Lanza found that one mother negotiated a “monolingual context” by using strategies (such as pretending to not understand the other language) that required the child to respond to her mother in the minority language (English) when interacting with her. In terms of parent-child bilingual interactions, language negotiation sequences can be based on both the ascription of preferences (or assessments of competence) by parents onto children (or vice versa in the case of adoptive parents speaking Russian) as well as the negotiators’ intentions or goals for interaction, e.g., a mother’s desire for her child to speak more or better English. I show in the analysis below that the choice to accommodate to a child’s assumed or expressed language preference has to do with multiple factors (a) the parents’ ascription of competence onto the children, (b) the
parents’ goals for the child’s language learning, and (c) the parents’ beliefs about the
effects of one language or the other on family communication.

Methods

Participants: Family Three

As noted in Chapter 4, Lesya and Lena, ages 15 and 16 at time of arrival, were
the oldest children to participate in the current study. One of the immediate issues for
Lena when she first arrived in the U.S. was that the local school system required her
to enter a “newcomer” program in the ninth grade although she would be graduating
from the vocational high school that year if she had stayed in Russia. Lesya was
younger, and the requirement to begin in ninth grade in the U.S. did not effect her
educational program as greatly.

At the start of data collection with Family Three, Melanie was at home with
the children on family leave. She returned to work around the third month of the
study. The family had also moved houses to a suburb further from the metro area and
the children had changed schools because of that move. Melanie was looking for
work closer to their new home, but for the duration of this study she commuted an
hour and a half to work each day once her leave had ended. For this reason Lena, the
eldest daughter, and also Lesya were sometimes responsible for babysitting the
younger children after school.

Data collection

Data collection in Family Three began one week prior to the teenagers’ arrival
in June, 2007 and extended eight months until the end of February, 2008. The family
was asked to self-record mealtimes once a week (in contrast to the once per month recording schedule of the established families One and Two) to chart Lesya and Lena’s language development (although data pertaining to language development per se are not presented here). The family was very busy with after-school activities and other commitments, and although they did report regularly eating dinner together, they did not return as many recordings as the other two families in the study (only about 4 hours total). Table 6.1 shows the total mealtime recordings conducted by Family Three.

Table 6.1: Family Three Recordings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Length</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3A June 1, 2007</td>
<td>Mealtime</td>
<td>22:49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3B July 18, 2007</td>
<td>Mealtime</td>
<td>18:39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3C August 2, 2007</td>
<td>Game</td>
<td>57:42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3D August 21, 2007</td>
<td>Mealtime</td>
<td>15:22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3E October 25, 2007</td>
<td>Mealtime</td>
<td>20:59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3F November, 2007*</td>
<td>Mealtime</td>
<td>15:21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3G November, 2007*</td>
<td>Mealtime</td>
<td>19:14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3H November, 2007*</td>
<td>Mealtime</td>
<td>10:29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3I November 12, 2007</td>
<td>Mealtime</td>
<td>12:25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3J December, 2007*</td>
<td>Mealtime</td>
<td>16:25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3K February 23, 2008</td>
<td>Mealtime</td>
<td>26:23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Exact date unknown

In addition, weekly interviews were conducted with Lesya and Lena in which the researcher asked them about their language learning, use of Russian, and transition to school in the U.S. Table 6.2 shows the total amount of interview data collected.
including intermittent monthly interviews with Melanie and one interview with Melanie and Paul.

**Table 6.2: Family Three interview data in minutes:seconds**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Length</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>July 18, 2007</td>
<td>34:07</td>
<td>Melanie (M), Lesya (L), Lena (L)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 2, 2007</td>
<td>16:02</td>
<td>L, L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 22, 2007</td>
<td>29:17</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 22, 2007</td>
<td>18:51</td>
<td>L, L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 31, 2007</td>
<td>15:10</td>
<td>L, L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 28, 2007</td>
<td>31:16</td>
<td>L, L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 27, 2007</td>
<td>25:45</td>
<td>L, L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 10, 2007</td>
<td>41:22</td>
<td>L, L, M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 6, 2008</td>
<td>34:30</td>
<td>L, L, M, Paul</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A total of four hours and 29 minutes of interview data were collected in Family Three.

**Transcription**

The researcher, a native English speaker whose second language is Russian, initially transcribed the recordings. A native Russian speaker whose second language is English then verified the transcriptions. After some discussion between transcribers, all utterances that could be determined to be in Russian were transcribed using Cyrillic. Initially, the native Russian-speaking transcriber had transcribed only those utterances with native Russian phonology in Cyrillic, which left the parents’ Russian utterances transcribed using a Roman alphabet transliteration. This was problematic because it suggested through the orthographic representation of the two languages on
the transcripts that non-native productions of Russian were not “real” Russian, and while the Roman alphabet transliteration of the parents’ speech might better represent their pronunciations of Russian words, it was not adequate for analyzing code mixing in the conversations because it suggested a third level of code use (i.e. non-native Russian) that obscured the current study’s interest in all members’ switching between the two languages. In the excerpts presented here from the mealtimes, the Cyrillic transcript is presented followed by a Romanized version of the Russian and then an English language translation with the words originally uttered in Russian underlined. In the text I use the Romanized version when referring to the transcripts in order to make reading easier for those who are not familiar with Cyrillic (more on uses of Russian-English orthography can be found in Angermeyer, 2005).

Coding

“Speaker” and “language” in these data were coded on two scales (represented by two different columns in an Excel spreadsheet): a) on the timescale of mealtime as a regular, repeated activity where English is the main language of interaction as described above and b) on the timescale of the immediate conversational episode where the language of interaction could be either English or Russian based on who is speaking with whom at the moment. From the perspective of the mealtime interaction, speakers were coded by the first initial of their name and language by English (E) or Russian (R). This first column made the typical language choice for each individual family member (or transepisodal preference [Auer, 1984]) more apparent. From the
perspective of the conversational episode (or the second column), the speaker who initiated the topic was coded as Speaker 1 and the language in which that speaker-initiated conversation was coded as Language A. Subsequent speakers and use of the other language were then coded as speaker 2/3/4 etc. and language B. This coding is the same coding used by Auer (1998) to show language negotiation sequences where speaker 1 using language A shifts to the other language after a pause (shown here as //</>) in a self-repair: Pattern Ib: … A1 //</> B1 B2 B1 B2 (p. 5). This column emphasized the pattern of the switching (how many utterances in one or the other language and what triggers such as pauses contributed to the switch) over who was speaking or which language was being used. Utterances that were not coded for language (and therefore not considered to be switches) included: proper names, back channels such as (oh, uh-huh, mhm), ok (which can be used in either language), and onomatopoeia.

Language negotiation sequences were identified as episodes in which there was a noticeable divergence in language choice between speakers usually marked by one of the following cues:

1. Switch away from a “transepisodal” preference
2. Disfluency or pause that precedes a switch (self-repair)
3. Minimal response that maintains the language of interaction without extended contribution
4. Explicit comment about language choice or competence
Multiparty discourse presented a challenge for interpreting language switches and language negotiation. While the mealtime conversations were mostly in English, side conversations between two or three participants often took place in Russian. Intervening turns by speakers not involved in the Russian conversation that appeared to be switches in the transcript, but had no relationship to the side conversation in terms of addressee, topic, etc. were not counted as switches.

In some cases, however, such interventions from other speakers did have an affect on the ongoing conversation by triggering a switch to the other language even if the utterance was not directly addressed to one of the interactants involved. In these cases, the intervening turn was counted as a switch. In many cases such decisions involved determining to what extent the eight family members were interacting with one another as opposed to alongside one another. In the early mealtimes as in the example above, Lesya and Lena seem to ignore or not be included in whole family talk; however, as their English competence grows they seem more sensitive to others’ talk and switches.

Findings

*Family perspectives on language learning and use*

Although Auer (1984, 1998) emphasized the locally produced and sequential nature of code-switching in interaction, he also drew on concepts of speaker interpretation of switches and speaker preference to link up the local context to larger macro-sociolinguistic aspects of language use. So-called “episode-external” preferences of speakers, according to Auer (1998), along with community norms can
help to pinpoint the conversational meaning of a case of code-switching. One of the goals of this chapter is to investigate how language preferences influenced language alternation in family interactions. In interviews and casual interactions with the family members when I visited their home, they talked about their own language preferences.

_Lesya and Lena’s perspectives_

Lena and Lesya from very early on in the study stated a preference for speaking English (or at least being spoken to in English in the family sphere). They saw the home environment as a good place to learn English:

Excerpt 6.1: It would be better


_Lena:_ Ну, лучше бы я сказала чего-то по-английски и они меня исправили слово там я не правильно там произнесла, лучше бы они меня исправили по-английски, как бы...

_Lesya:_ Потому что все еще ошибок очень много.

_Lena:_ Well, it would be better if I said something in English and they corrected the word, like I didn't pronounce it right like, it would be better if they corrected my English, like...

_Lesya:_ Because there is still a lot of mistakes.

Even after school started in September, Lesya and Lena suggested that they wanted to speak more English at home because they already understood everything at school. This was partly motivated by the fact that they felt they would do better at
school if they had more English at home and that they felt left out of some of the family interactions because they did not understand:

**Excerpt 6.2: The first time we sat down as a whole family**

August 2, 2007 (Lesya – 15, Lena – 16)

*Lena:* Ну, когда первый раз вообще, я помню, когда мы первый раз вообще сели всей семьей ужинать, как бы, мы вообще, неловко чувствовали себя в этой ситуации, они чисто по-английски все говорят, чего-то даже про нас говорили, как бы, смеялись, нам обидно, мне обидно, как бы, чуть-чуть было, что мы не понимаем, то есть они смеются, а мы сидим с Лесей вот так на друг друга смотрим. То есть, а сейчас они даже вообще говорят, как бы, мы уже тоже понимаем уже.

*Lena:* Well at first when, I remember, when we the first time in general sat down as a whole family to eat dinner, like, we in general, felt uncomfortable in this situation, they are speaking totally in English, they even said something about us, like laughed, it was offensive to us. It was offensive to me, like, a little bit it was, that we don’t understand and that is they are laughing, and Lesya and I are sitting here so looking at each other. That is, but now even in general they are speaking, like, we already also understand already.

In addition to wanting to learn English (and speak English with the family members), Lesya and Lena also stated a desire to maintain Russian and continue using Russian in daily life. They cited negative examples in interviews of other adopted children who lost Russian because their parents did not want them to maintain it and
of Russian Americans (such as a Math teacher at school) who had developed American accents. The school environment provided less opportunity for Russian use and maintenance (although by February Lesya and Lena had begun to learn and speak some Spanish with peers at school), and therefore Lesya and Lena had to find a way to reconcile their desire to use more English at home (for the sake of learning and fitting into the family) with maintaining their Russian. One of the main ways they accomplished this was over time narrowing their Russian in the family sphere to mainly with the children (and primarily with two stronger Russian speakers) and taking on the role of language teacher at home.

Excerpt 6.3: They want to remember Russian

Lena: Ну, они все хотят вспомнить русский, чтобы мы им помогли. То есть они нам помогут говорить на английском, а мы им по-русски.

Lena: Well, they all want to remember Russian, they want us to help them. That is they’ll help us speak English and we’ll help them in Russian.

The teacher role extended to other spheres as well. Lesya in particular noted that she taught the Spanish-speaking boys at school some Russian, and both indicated that they were helping the other adopted children regain their Russian competence. They even noted that sometimes they corrected their parents. The teacher role, then, allowed Lesya and Lena a reason to continue using Russian at the same time that they shifted to English more in interaction with their parents. In the following analysis I
will trace these developments in the family conversations; however, first it will be
useful to consider Melanie and Paul’s perspectives as parents on these topics.

Melanie and Paul’s perspectives
Although Melanie and Paul both spoke some Russian and used Russian in
interaction with Lesya and Lena when they first arrived, as is evident in the analysis
below, they primarily viewed the family sphere as an English language environment.
Melanie, in particular, felt that Lesya and Lena’s growing English competence
contributed to their “fitting in” with the family more

Excerpt 6.4: They are more a part of the family
November 10, 2007 (Lesya – 15, Lena – 17)
Melanie: They are speaking a lot more English.
Lyn: Both of them?
Melanie: Yes, Lesya not as much as Lena, but they are both speaking a lot more
English. And I’ve noticed they are more part of the family, I think they are seeing us
more as a family as opposed to them just kind of sitting around here whatever -- you
know, they are getting the idea of more, seem to be more relaxed...

This perspective coincides with Lena’s statement above that they were uncomfortable
at family dinners because they didn’t understand what was being said. Although
speaking English was seen to be a key to becoming a member of the family, when
asked what seemed to help Lesya and Lena learn English the most, both Melanie and
Paul pointed to activities outside of the family environment. In an interview in
January (six months after Lesya and Lena’s arrival), both Melanie and Paul suggested
that communicating with other non-native English-speaking peers (mainly boys) outside of school had been a major factor in Lesya and Lena’s acquisition of English. This also coincides with Lesya and Lena’s early perceptions that the family environment was not as facilitative of English language development as they would have liked. In this sense then, although Melanie and Paul had stated goals for Lesya and Lena to learn English, they did not push these goals in the everyday interactions (and like the parents in Family Two stated negative feelings about explicit corrections, using recasting strategies instead).

Despite Melanie and Paul’s acceptance of and use of Russian in their home, within the first months of data collection the parents made explicit an English-only policy at mealtimes both in the dinnertime recordings (by reminding children to use English) and in interviews. This promotion of English, as reported by Melanie, was encouraged by the family social worker as a way to assuage some of the conflict that had arisen between the children that seemed associated with language competence. By the third month of the study (September) Russian had begun to be seen as something that divided the family because the first two arrivals, Inna and Tolya, did not have the same level of competence and therefore could not interact with Lesya and Lena as Valya and David did. In short, the family members’ goals for English language learning and Russian language maintenance were drawn into conflict by concomitant processes of establishing interpersonal relationships in the family and constructing a cohesive family identity.
Family language use

Lesya and Lena with their parents

As noted above, Family Three was the only family in this study who had children (adoptees) prior to the arrival of the two focal children for the study Lesya and Lena. The socialization processes that are identified here, therefore, inform understandings of not only how children socialize parents (as demonstrated in Chapters 4 and 5), but also how siblings and the family unit as a whole are influenced by the arrival of new (Russian-speaking) children. While Melanie and Paul successfully negotiate Russian-language use in talk that includes them or that is directed at the whole family, Russian is negotiated by Lesya and Lena with the children (i.e. David and Valya) who have enough competence to use it regularly.

You speak yours, we speak ours?

In the early recordings taken in Family Three (primarily in August), there is a preference for Melanie and Paul as parents and Lesya and Lena as children to accommodate to each other’s language dominance (and not necessarily the language of initiation of the immediate conversational episode). This accommodation was accomplished by three main strategies (a) Paul and Melanie addressed Lesya and Lena exclusively in Russian when initiating new topics or selecting them as interlocutors; (b) Lesya and Lena used an accommodation strategy that involved varying the quality and quantity of their Russian productions with their parents based on who initiated the topic/conversation; and (c) all four speakers (parents and Lesya and Lena) used “third person talk” or recruited another speaker (usually Valya) to
translate, thereby maintaining the language of interaction between initial two speakers and introducing the second language only with a third party participant (outside of the original participant constellation). I will discuss each of these phenomena in excerpts from the data below.

In the first transcript (3A), taken approximately two weeks after the girls’ arrivals, Paul and Melanie address Lesya and Lena exclusively in Russian as seen in the excerpt below where Melanie’s turns, except for “no” in line 88, are in Russian.

Excerpt 6.5: Cold beets

(3B, August, Lesya – 15; Lena – 16)

78 Melanie: Anybody else want cold beets before I warm them up?
79 ?: Me please.
80 Right there.
81 Thank you.
82 <Paul clears throat>
83 Melanie: Mkay.
84 Lena? Lesya?
85 Ты хочешь?
86 Lena?: No.
87 Melanie: Холодно?

Holodno?
Cold?

88 No?

89 Хорошо.

Horoshо.

Ok.

90 ((pause))

Melanie’s initiation in line 84-85 (Lesya? Lena? Ti hochesh?) represents a translation of the prior talk between Melanie and the other children (asking if anyone wants the beet salad before she heats it). The switch here signals a shift in participant constellation and contextualizes the selection of Lesya and Lena as addressees by the shift in language. It also indicates Melanie’s ascription of Lesya and Lena as “Russian speakers” in the family interaction as Melanie does not regularly initiate conversation in Russian with any other family members. There is little doubt that Melanie uses Russian with Lesya and Lena to increase their comfort level and make sure their needs (i.e. getting enough to eat) are met. However, Auer (1984) indicates that such switches imply a face threat at the same time that they imply accommodation to the addressee. Switching languages in this case marks interaction with Lesya and Lena as something different than interaction amongst the whole family and sets the two new arrivals apart from the rest of the family members by positioning them as “non-English” speakers. This loss of face might account for why one of the girls responds with the English “no” in line 86. More generally, Lesya and Lena used minimal responses such as this one when they were addressed in Russian by their parents in
the early months, suggesting that they preferred to be addressed in English or did not want to negotiate for meaning with their parents in Russian.

The sequence of parent initiates a topic in Russian – child responds with minimal response is prevalent in these early data, not only in offers of food, but also when more complicated or involved topics are introduced as in the following episode where Paul makes an offer to Lena to drive the lawn mower (little car) the next day.

Excerpt 6.6: Malenkaya?

(3B, August, Lesya – 15; Lena – 16)

110 Paul: Сегодня ум, гимнастика.

Segodnia uhm, gymnastics

Today uhm, gymnastics.

111 ?: Мhm.

112 Paul: Может быть завтра, все, [uhm],

Mozhet bit’ zavtra, vse, uhm

Maybe tomorrow, everything, [uhm].

113 ?: [/??/?]

114 Paul: машина <to Melanie>?

Mashina?

The car?

115 Melanie: Oh yeh, she was asking if she could go on that.

116 Paul: Мm.

117 Lena: Маленькая?
Malenkaya?

*The small one?*

118 Paul: Да, да, очень маленьк - но, это.

*Da, da, ochen’ malen’ – no, eto.*

*Yeh, veyh, very small, but, this.*

119 Hahh.

120 Папа может, не все это уhm, но, uhm,

*Papa mozhet, ne vse eto uhm, no, uhm*

*Papa can, not everything this uhm, but, uhm.*

121 Melanie: She said she was going to mow the [rest of] the lawn tonight.

122 Paul: [/Full/].

123 Ah, but she has to go to gymnastics.

124 Melanie: A:h,

125 Ok.

In this episode Paul produces four turns primarily in Russian as he addresses Lena, and even addresses one question to Melanie in Russian, “mashina?” In line 114. However, even though the conversation seems to be aimed at agreeing with Lena as to when she can ride the small car (or perhaps the riding lawn mower), Lena takes only one turn in response, “malenkaya?” in line 117 as a clarification request. The rest of the discussion is then carried out in English as Melanie serves as a speaker for Lena, “she said she was going to mow the rest of the lawn tonight” in line 121. And Paul and Melanie discuss Lena’s planned activities for her.
It seems that Lena’s apparent hesitation to join in this conversation is similar to what we saw above; however, in this case Paul’s limited Russian competence might have also played a role. Lena takes on a role of greater expertise in line 117 as she initiates a sort of negotiation for meaning of her father’s Russian, but stops at that point and allows the conversation to proceed in English. By negotiating further, she would have positioned herself as a person in more power in the conversation. So far, then, we’ve seen two examples where the girls refrain from extended conversation in Russian when addressed in Russian by their parents. These minimal responses are not related to the girls’ competence in Russian as they are both fluent first language speakers of the language as can be seen in other excerpts, but rather their relationship with their parents and their position in the family circle.

In contrast to the minimal response strategy used in the girls’ responses to their parents’ Russian, their initiations of topics in Russian with their parents were generally more complex. In Excerpt 6.7 we see Lena asks her mother in Russian if Lesya can go to gymnastics to watch. Melanie does not initially understand the question and rephrases it as a clarification request, to which Lena repeats part of her original questions. Melanie then responds that she knows, and then talks about Lena in the third person in English to Paul.

Excerpt 6.7: Smotret na nas
(3B, August, Lesya – 15; Lena – 16)
210 Lena: Mame <or mommy>?  
Mame?
Леся тоже хочет смотреть на нас.

Lesya tozhe hochet smotret’ na nas.

Lesya also wants to watch us.

?: Who is this?

Melanie: Ты хочешь гимнастику?

Ti hochesh’ gymnastics – Gimnastik?

You (sing.) want gymnastics – gimnastik?

Lena: Mm,

Melanie?: No.

Paul: /No/

Lena: [Смотреть на нас.

[Smotret’ na nas.

[To watch us.

?: [/???/

Melanie: Oh, смотреть.

Oh, smotret’,

Oh, to watch.

Да да, я знаю.

Da, da, ya znayu.

Yeh, veh, I know.

?: Mommy?

?: Ok?
223  ?:       [Yeh, Melanie:       [She's mentioned it about four times today.

In contrast to the one-word Russian responses given by Lesya and Lena in the previous two excerpts, in this excerpt Lena uses more complex utterances to initiate a new topic (that Lesya wants to go watch gymnastics class) with her mother in line 211. Melanie responds by asking, “you (sing.) want gymnastics?,” pronouncing first the English word and then the Russian cognate. Lena responds with a minimal response “mm” perhaps signaling that she doesn’t understand Melanie or she thinks Melanie didn’t understand her. Melanie switches here to English, “no,” signaling a language preference without making a strong move (i.e. a question) toward a switch. Lena maintains Russian and engages in negotiation for meaning rather than negotiation of language choice at this point. She provides a clarification, emphasizing the verb “to watch us,” suggests that she interpreted Melanie’s first statement to mean that she thought Lesya wanted to take gymnastics. Melanie repeats the verb “to watch” with intonation to indicate she understood (also indicating that she knows the word “smotret’,” but just didn’t hear or understand the first time). Melanie continues to maintain English to conclude the conversation “I know” and then switches to English to comment on the interaction with Paul, “she mentioned it about four times today.” This last statement makes it hard to understand why Melanie was confused about the topic in the first place since she had already had this same conversation, but perhaps Melanie was expecting a new conversation or some explanation for why Lesya wanted to watch gymnastics class.
There are two main points to take away from these three excerpts, the first is that Lesya and Lena seem to be negotiating at least to some extent what Zentella (1997) calls a “you speak what you know best and I speak what I know best” interactional context with their parents. Being addressed by their parents in Russian sets them apart from the other siblings and, in their view, limits their opportunities for learning English. They seem to discourage their parents from addressing them in Russian by responding with minimal responses. On the other hand, when they bring up new topics or make requests of their parents, at least in the first two months, they do so in Russian. At this point they do not switch to English when their parents switch, as in the above example when Melanie briefly switches to English. Instead, switches to English contextualize changing of the participant constellation in these examples.

The second point related to this “I speak mine, you speak yours” strategy is that there seems to be in a subtle way competition between negotiation of language choice and negotiation for meaning in situations where speakers have limited competence in each other’s languages. In these early examples, Melanie and Paul do not negotiate the language of interaction with their children, but rather maintain Russian and negotiate for meaning in their second language. This positions the girls as experts or language teachers to an extent as in the above example where Lena emphasizes the verb “smotret” to draw her mother’s attention to her meaning. In the three examples here, there is more negotiation for meaning when Lena introduces the topic than when their parents do. This further suggests that the girls feel more
comfortable using Russian and displaying their Russian competence when they are in control of the topic and initiation, but take a more passive role when their parents initiate. In sum, in these data Melanie and Paul maintain Russian in interaction with the two girls by negotiating for meaning in Russian rather than negotiating language choice. This pattern, however, changes in the following months.

*Mama, Lena, and Lesya – negotiating an English-language context*
Starting as early as the second month after Lesya and Lena’s arrival, Melanie began to negotiate English language use from the girls and Lena in particular. Melanie suggested in interviews that these active efforts to encourage and support Lena’s English productions were based on her judgments of Lena’s language competence and “readiness” to speak English as well as her concerns about some divisions that Russian use seemed to be causing between the siblings. Melanie initiates the following conversation, about some dental work Lena had done earlier that day, in Russian but then slowly switches to English.

Excerpt 6.8: Teeth
(3D, August, Lesya – 15; Lena – 17)

586 Melanie: Хорошо?

_Horosho?_

587 It’s ok?

588 Не больно?

_Ne bol’no?_
It doesn’t hurt?

589 Lena: Не привычно, что там ack <makes creaky noise> пломба.

Ne privichno, shto tam ack plomba.

It’s unusual, that there’s ack lead.

590 Melanie: Yes.

591 Lena: Дырка.

Dirka.

A hole.

592 Melanie: Yeh.

593 Lena: Сделали.

Sdelali.

They made.

594 Melanie: Yeh.

595 Lena: Не привычно.

Ne privichno.

It’s unusual.

596 Melanie: Oh yeh, yeh.

597 Feels funny?

598 Lena: И зубы,

I zubi,

And the teeth.

599 Они были такие kch <noise>
Oni bili takie kch

They were like kch

600 Melanie: Yeh.
601 <Paul talking in background>
602 Lena: Маленькие.

Malenkie.

The small ones.

603 Были большие,

Bili bol’shie,

They were big.

604 Melanie: Mhm.
605 Lena: Mm.
606 Melanie: Way back there?
607 Ah!
608 Lena: /Yeh/ <or zdes’>.
609 Melanie: Mhm.
610 So you still have three,
61 Lena: Здесь three <talking with mouth open> uh huh huh.

Zdes’ three

Here three.

613 Melanie: Three.
Lena: И, three three.
I, three three.

*And, three three.*

Melanie: Three and three?

Three, three, three, three?

Lena: No!

Three уже,

*Three уже.*

Melanie: Yeh, already, yes.

Lena: Здесь.

*Zdes*. 

Melanie: Yes, those [three have to be done, yes

Lena: [Three

Lena: Uh,

?: /Mommy/ <background>? 

Lena: Two.

Melanie: Two over [there, yes.

Lena: [Моей

*Moeyi.*

*Mine*
?: /???

Lena: /???

Melanie: Yes, /plus those/.

?: Mommy?

Melanie: Yes.

Inna: Uhm, daddy ah. said I have to take the uhm things out of the -

the napkins that people have thrown in the garbage.

I said, uh, I have to thro - th - reach my hand into the garbage.

I mean, I said I have to reach my hand into the toilet - I mean garbage.

Melanie: Ok.

Inna: And then I said at least it's better than the TOILET!

Melanie: Thank you, Inna.

Lena: [Bl, bl, bbblblbl <imitating Inna’s English>.

Here we see that while Melanie initiates this episode in Russian, once she has Lena engaged, she begins to switch to English. Lanza (2004) enumerates several strategies that parents of bilingual children can use in interaction to shape the discourse as more monolingual or more bilingual (the monolingual context considered more effective in developing competence in a minority language). Here Melanie uses a “code-switch” strategy, first just with backchannels “yeh”, “oh yeh” and then with an approximate translation “feels funny.” These English utterances construct an English language context to which Lena must respond; however, Lena’s initial
responses are to simplify her Russian and use sounds and one-word utterances to be understood (maintaining a Russian-language interaction). Finally, Melanie asks a direct question in English in line 606, which causes Lena to shift to English for the first part of her response “could be” and then back to Russian “zdes’’” (here). Lena then uses mixed utterances with Russian words “i” (and), “zdes’” (here), and English “two” and “three.” In an interview where Melanie listened to this clip, she commented that she knew Lena knew the word “uzhe” so repeated it in English to help her remember. Here we see the role that questions and other initiators (first pair parts) play in determining the language of interaction as Melanie’s questions trigger the switch to English by Lena and reinforce the English language discourse context. Lena’s English productions “three” and then numbers “two” along with Russian adverbs and adjectives suggest that a type of discourse-related switching is also at play in that Lena repeats her mother, “three” and maintains cohesion through choice of English for the numbers, while at the same time maintaining a Russian preference in choice of the function words.

Auer (1984) found that code-switches in language negotiation sequences often occurred after a pause where the code-switch took the form of a self-repair. Speakers seemed to interpret pauses as indication of having chosen the “wrong” language and then switched to the other language to accommodate to their interlocutor. In this interaction between Melanie and Lena, no such self-repair tactics are present. Instead, Melanie’s initiating moves in the form of questions shape the context for Lena to use more English. Although her moves result in controlling the language of interaction,
they also serve to support Lena in her efforts to speak English and here we see a relationship between power and connection maneuvers as outlined in Tannen (2007) and discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

In the end of this excerpt, Inna (one of the English-dominant adoptees in the family) recounts a story to her mother about putting her hand in the trash can (because people had thrown trash in the can when there was no bag). Melanie responds briefly in a slightly dismissive manner, “Thank you, Inna,” and Lena then imitates Inna’s with nonsense syllables “bl, bl, bl.” Here the juxtaposition of Inna’s story with Lena’s effortful explanation of the dentistry work she had done and Lena’s metalinguistic response suggest rising tension between the English-dominant and Russian-dominant siblings.

In the previous four episodes that took place from July to August, 2007, or the first two months after Lesya and Lena’s arrival, we see Melanie shifting strategies to negotiate an English monolingual interaction context (Lanza, 2004) with Lesya and Lena. We also see at the end of Excerpt 6.8 that conflict, or at least resentment, had begun to arise between the siblings over language competence, and this was further confirmed by interview reports in which Melanie suggested that they would start English-only dinners to assuage some of the division. Melanie’s increasingly explicit promotion of English as a family language, then, is primarily motivated by the immediate problem (which she did not anticipate) of Russian being a dividing force between the new siblings and also her desire to help Lena and Lesya speak more English. By November, Melanie reported in interviews using mostly English in her
conversations with the children. In the following section I will examine how Melanie and Lesya and Lena negotiate communication breakdowns and language choice in the later transcripts (November to February) as Melanie’s English language policy becomes more explicit and Lesya and Lena’s English competence increases.

Perhaps the most explicit example of divergence in language choice between Melanie and Lesya and Lena is found in data from a mealtime in October (3 months after the girls’ arrival). Here, Lena and Lesya maintain the “I speak mine, you speak yours” mode despite Melanie’s implicit refusal to engage directly with them as they are speaking Russian.

Excerpt 6.9: Eto bol’no

(3E, October 25, 2007, Lesya – 15, Lena -17)

40 Lena: Э, мама, это больно.

        *Eh, mama, eto bol’no.*

41 ??: /???/ ничего не делала.

        */???/ nichego ne delala.*

        */???/ didn’t do anything <fem.>.

42 Lena: Mama.

43 Это /???.

        *Eto /???/.*

        *This /???.*

44 Melanie: Ok.
I'll get you something after dinner I'll give you some - some medicine.

Lena: Я не люблю /medicine/.

Ya ne lublu /medicine/.

I don’t like <also “love”> /medicine/.

Я не люблю /???.

Ya ne lublu /???.

I don’t like /???.

Valya?: /???

Lesya: Почему ((to Valya))?

Pochemy?

Why?

Melanie: She doesn't love what?

? /???

Valya?: /???

Lesya: У нее горло [болит сегодня.

U nee gorlo [bolit segodnia.

Her throat hurts today.

Melanie: [When /your/ head hurts?

?: Uh, uh, uh!

Melanie: Yeh, nobody does.

Yeh, nobody likes it.

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Here Lena addresses her mother in Russian to complain about a pain, Melanie responds in English, “I’ll get you some medicine,” and Lena responds in Russian with an English borrowing\(^1\), “I don’t like medicine.” At this point Melanie stops interacting directly with Lena and recruits the other children to confirm her interpretations of their Russian utterances, “She doesn't love what?” and then to Lesya, “When your head hurts?” In the previous excerpts, Melanie responded to Lena’s initiations in Russian and even engaged in negotiation for meaning in her weaker language. Here, Melanie does not switch to Russian even though Lena and Lesya continue to speak Russian, and she negotiates for meaning in English through an “interpreter”. Through these strategies, Melanie suggests that she should be addressed in English. By December, most of the conversations involving Melanie and the two teenagers (as well as Paul) were conducted in English only.

**Lesya, Lena and four siblings – negotiating Russian use**

Over the first few months after Lesya and Lena’s arrival, language competence became a topic of explicit talk and competition. While Valya and David were noted by Melanie as well as Lesya and Lena to still be able to use Russian, the first arrivals who had been adopted three years earlier did not use their Russian as

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\(^1\) This also could be interpreted as a cohesive tie, but in previous conversations Melanie had debated over the use of the words “likarstvo” and “tablet” in Russian as appropriate translations for English “medicine”. I interpret the use of the English word as a resolution of this problem in this family’s discourse.
easily. This division in language competence also caused divisions between the siblings, especially for Inna, who felt left out of the interactions between the three other girls when they used Russian. Competition over English language competence, however, was more explicit as the children and parents compared their gains in English and relative outcomes. Here we see Inna criticize Valya’s command of English.

(2E, October 25, 2007, Lesya – 15, Lena – 17)

830 Inna: You've been here one year,

831 Melanie: Four months.

832 Valya: I underst[and, Inna.

833 Inna?: [Four months.

834 Inna: And, . not lots of English.

835 Like –

836 Melanie: Inna, [Inna,

837 Inna: [You know?

838 Melanie: don't get involved in that conversation, please.

839 ?: You.

840 Inna: What?

841 Valya?: /Not English/.

842 Lena: Че она сказала, [что типа ты плохо говоришь?

*Che ona skazala,[shto tipa ti ploho govorish’?*

*What did she say, that you like don’t speak well?*
Here Lena’s comment in line 842 and switch to Russian shows solidarity toward Valya.

Negotiations with David
There is also evidence that David in particular began to speak more Russian over the eight months of the study. In interactions with David over the seven months of the study Lesya and Lena negotiate the use of more Russian. While at the beginning, Lesya and Lena lead this process, as David regains his competence in Russian, he himself begins to negotiate the interactions toward Russian use. In this way, these four siblings (Lesya, Lena, Valya, and David) are able to maintain Russian in the family conversations as I will show in the excerpts below.

In Excerpt 6.12 from July, one month after Lesya and Lena’s arrival, David seems unwilling to switch to Russian to interact with Lena.

Excerpt 6.12: On strashniy?

(3B, July 18, 2007, Lena – 16, David – 9)

Lena: Ну и как Давид, он страшный?

David: /???, asking me/

Lena?: Страшный?
Lena initiates the conversation with a question in Russian in line 492. David responds in English with something along the lines of “I don’t know what you’re asking me” (although part of the utterance is intelligible in the recording) in line 493. Lena repeats the word “strashniy” or “scary/weird,” and David again replies in English with a clarification request, “What?” So far David has maintained English and Lena has
maintained Russian. At this point Lena changes the question and the recipient by asking a question to Valya, “Otkuda oni ego znayut,” (How do they know him), and referring to David and Tolya in the third person, “they.” At this point, David understands the question and responds in Russian, “On hodil tam” (line 498), which Valya repeats. Although Lena has not obtained the exact information she was seeking, i.e. what type of person the guy was, she has successfully negotiated a Russian language interaction with David by simplifying her question.

As a further example, in transcript 3D, approximately one month after the example in Excerpt 6.12, David initiates conversation with Lena in Russian. In this example, however, Melanie objects to his Russian use.

6.13: Lubish?

(3D, August 21, 2007, Lena – 17, David – 9)

366 Melanie: Could you pass the salad please?
367 Paul: Mhm.
368 Melanie: Thank you.
369 David: Любишь?

*Lubish?*

*Do you like it?*

370 Melanie: David, you know how to say любишь,

*David, you know how to say lubish,*

*David, you know how to say you like,*

371 You - you know what that [means in English?
Melanie: How to say it in English?

I - I think they know that word in English.

Tolya?: You love?

?: Like.

?: Like.

Melanie: Do you like.

Paul: Well

Lena?: Да.

Yes.

Lena: Yes.

Tolya?: Yehas.

Luc?: /???

Paul: Aren't we doing English dinners?

Melanie: Uh, I haven't started that yet.

Tolya?: English dinners?

This excerpt takes place during the same time when Melanie begins to put more pressure on the family to use more English (around September). Melanie directs David to use English for words that Lesya and Lena know in English (line 370).
In the first excerpt, David did not immediately use Russian but eventually found a way to respond once Lena simplified her question. In the second excerpt, David directly addresses Lesya and Lena in Russian but is reprimanded for that choice. In the following excerpt, negotiation occurs between himself and Lesya in which David ultimately leads the negotiation toward Russian.

Excerpt 6.11: Ne takuyu.


50 Melanie: How?
51 ?: She a lo::t
52 Valya: I don't know.
53 Lesya: /??/? дай /??/? пожайлуйста /??/.

/??/ dai /??/ pozhaluysta.

/??/ give me /??/ please.

54 Melanie: She has some potato on her plate, I [see that.
55 David: [Mm?
56 Lesya: /??/?
57 David: Mm?
58 Lesya: That.
59 ?: And corn.
60 David: Какую?

Kakuyu?

Which one?
Lesya: [Любую.

*Любую.*

*Any one.*

?: [We -

/the/ juice.

David: /???

Lesya: Не большую, маленькую.

*Ne bol'shuyu, malenkuyu.*

*Not a big one, a small one.*

Paul: /??/? then you can have five of em?

Lesya: <burps> [Нет не такую!

*Nyet ne takuyu!*

Paul: /??/?

?: Hmm.

Paul: Is that one too small?

Lesya: Не, не такую!

*Nye, ne takuyu!*

*No, not that one!*

<laughter>

Lesya: [Нет, не такую.

*No, not that one.*
In this excerpt Lesya initially asks David for some food in Russian. He doesn’t understand and responds with a minimal, mm?, avoiding a switch to English. Lesya at this point switches to English, suggesting that she interpreted the clarification request as a choice of the “wrong” language. David, however, switches back to
Russian in the next turn by repeating Lesya’s utterance “that” in Russian as a question, “takuyu?”. This interaction continues as Lesya directs David as to which potato she wants (this turns out to be a kind of game), causing the whole family to laugh. David then comments on the interaction in English to the rest of the family members, a strategy we’ve seen in several examples above. This comment, however, rather than demarcating divergence in language choice as in the example with Melanie above, seems to build solidarity by including the English dominant family members in the Russian language interaction. At the same time, this switch serves to construct the domains for the two languages in the whole family interaction where Russian can be used between himself and Lesya, but English is for whole family use.

Conclusions

*Language competence and language negotiation*

I started this chapter on the premise that code-switching in the adoptive family context, where family members have different language competences as well as linguistic and cultural backgrounds, could have social functions related to identity construction. I found that in this family in particular code-switching was specifically related to negotiations of language choice between the unbalanced bilinguals who were family members. I further found that changing language competences were related to changing patterns in language negotiation. This relationship was cyclical. As Lesya and Lena began to gain competence in English, their mother used more divergent negotiation strategies to encourage the use of English (although this did not
always work as in Excerpt 6.9). In addition, as David gained productive competence or even confidence in using Russian, he was seen to negotiate toward Russian with Lesya and Lena on his own. One aspect of these processes noted in the data here was that in interactions between unbalanced bilinguals who have some competence in each other’s languages, participants can make a choice to either negotiate for meaning in their weaker language (and accommodate to their interactants’ dominant language) or negotiate language choice so that they maintain their own personal language preference.

Other factors also played a role in language negotiations in the family, however. Melanie and Paul, for example, used Russian with Lesya and Lena and engaged in interactions that would be typical of language-learning interactions (negotiation for meaning and explicit talk about the second language); however, whatever increased competence or use they experienced as a result of these interactions did not result in establishing a more Russian-speaking context over time. Melanie’s attitudes and beliefs about Russian use in the family and her representation of the dominant cultural norms resulted in English language use despite the fact that in the early months Lesya and Lena seemed to prefer using Russian with their parents as long as they were in the initiating role.

*Code-switching and family identity*

In many ways language competence and language negotiations were intimately related to the processes of family formation as the two newest arrivals, Lesya and Lena, were integrated into the family. Divisions between the siblings were
noted along gender and linguistic lines (with the Russian-proficient girls excluding the English-dominant sister), and competing interests between promoting the majority language and maintaining the minority language created tension in the family conversations. The children themselves played an active role in determining how these processes played out. Although Melanie and Paul’s explicit promotion of English as a family language played a role in shifting the whole family to English conversations, the English language dominance of the other children also caused this to happen. Lena and Lesya’s desires to keep their Russian, however, could be seen in their preference for Russian talk and their efforts to engage the other siblings in Russian conversations. By “teaching” the younger children Russian they were able to maintain their own language competence and carve out space for Russian in the family domain.

In the previous two chapters, I concluded that narrative talk and metalinguistic talk ultimately allowed the members of the families opportunities to construct family identities on longer timescales through reference to times in the more distant past and more removed places (i.e. Ukraine or Russia prior to the adoption). In Family Three such past histories were more immediate in the sense that Lesya and Lena communicated with friends from Russia regularly via email and the whole family knew of each other over the years through the multiple adoptions (Melanie and Paul had kept in touch with the orphanage from which the first two children as well as Lesya and Lena were adopted). In some senses then, talk about orphanage life and the children’s prior histories was more commonplace in Family Three than in the
other two families. This open connection to the past time and place also made Russian more relevant for the children in Family Three, first by its continued use as a result of the multiple adoptions and second by the sustained contact with acquaintances in Russia.

Maintaining Russian language competence is one of the most obvious ways for international adoptees to keep their connections to their birth culture and retain that piece of their identities (see discussions in King & Mackey, 2007); however, few research reports to date suggest that this is an achievable goal for internationally adoptive families where parents and children do not share language backgrounds. In this chapter I have shown how over a period of eight months together, Family Three was able to “revitalize” and maintain Russian in its daily interactions. Even though the participants determined the amount of Russian language use in these interactions (and not all family members regularly used Russian), some of the family members achieved a bilingual identity as each individual played a role in accepting, speaking, and understanding the minority language. Ultimately, the children themselves played the most important role in this process by wanting to maintain their first languages and making the effort to accommodate to one another’s Russian competencies.
Chapter 7: Implications and conclusions

In the preceding chapters I have examined the ways in which older internationally adopted children negotiated their interactional needs and preferences in interaction with their parents and thereby actively shaped language socialization processes in the family. I have primarily focused on how the children in the three participating families used resistance, elicitation, and negotiation moves to influence their parents’ discourse practices. However, these identifiable strategies used by the children (i.e. “nothing” responses, What is X? questions, and choice of a minority language) were not the only aspect of the children’s language to influence their parents. In addition to these explicit strategies, the children’s developing language competencies (shown in the changing metalinguistic discourse of Family Two and code-switching practices of Family Three) and outside socialization from school and peer groups (in the narrative routine of Family One) also played a role in how parents and children participated in interactions with one another.

Although one of the limitations of the current study is that it does not delve deeply into all of the possible ways in which novices can influence experts in terms of language socialization, it does provide a more comprehensive view of the aspects of children’s language that can influence parents’ interactional strategies. Previous studies have usually focused on or noted only one or two of these areas. Luykx (2003) for example pointed to children’s developing competencies as socializing influences on parents’ strategies (as well as the outside influence of the majority
languages). Gordon (2007), in her analysis of the construction of a family political identity, identified the single child’s strategies of asking questions and responding to parental prompts as contributing to a collaborative process of socialization. Finally, many studies document school-age children’s introduction of a majority (school) language into the minority language home (Felling, 2007; Tuominen, 1999; Wong Fillmore, 2000; Zentella, 1997); however, few examine the actual interactional processes and changing family language policies involved in family language shift (King, Fogle, & Logan Terry, 2008). Of these different factors, the current study focused primarily on the second phenomenon or children’s interactional strategies, which has been lacking in studies of family language socialization.

Children’s agentive communication strategies require parents to respond in a limited set of ways (e.g., to answer a question, to use one or another language, to take part in a game). These strategies are developed by the children in the current study in response to the discourse context of the family (e.g., in response to available communicative resources or to constraints on the type of identities that can be constructed), but also change with their growing language competencies and are influenced by outside socializing agents as I have discussed above. In this way, a more complete view of how macro processes of social change, instantiated in change in family discourse patterns, becomes available through analysis of intergenerational interactions and negotiations in the family. The context of the internationally adoptive family with older children brings these processes to the foreground as
negotiation becomes central to the process of coming to know one another and forming a family across linguistic and cultural differences.

Another limitation of the study is that a fourth potential influence on parents is present in these data, but was not covered extensively here. For the adoptive families in this study, the culture and language of an “other” country (Russia and Ukraine) also play a role. Without more thorough investigation of the children’s perceptions of their interactive environments, starting ideally immediately after arrival, it is difficult to determine what practices developed by the children in this study are based on prior socialization (or discursive norms in Russian) and what are in response to the immediate context. For this reason I have refrained from discussing in great detail what “Russians do” or how the children might be drawing on discourse patterns from Russian. Although, the older children in Family Three occasionally touched on this topic in the weekly interviews, and there is evidence in the data that they transfer discourse strategies from Russian in English. What I have shown is that the cultural and linguistic differences between the parents and children in this study lead to a process of interpretation and negotiation between parents and children specifically to find out what the children know, what they can do, and what they want to do in interaction that shapes socializing interactions such as narrative talk, metalinguistic talk, and language choice.

Intersubjectivity, culture, and learning
The process of coming to know, interpret, and anticipate the older adoptees’ needs and preferences in interaction is very similar to the process of developing “intersubjectivity” between mother and preverbal infant as described in Bruner (1983). As the mother responds to an infant’s cries over time, she learns to interpret or anticipate the infant’s needs at the same time that the infant learns to expect such responses.

The existence of such reciprocity – buttressed by the mother’s increasing capacity to differentiate an infant’s “reasons” for crying as well as by the infant’s capacity to anticipate these consistencies – soon creates a form of mutual attention, a harmony or ‘intersubjectivity…’ (Bruner, 1983, p. 27)

The children in the current study developed patterns of responding to the language environment of the family in which they were situated which in turn resulted in a set of responses from the parents. As the children and parents came to expect these routines, they were able to make changes to their strategy use and even break from the routine to find other ways of talking.

The parents in the three families explained their aspects of the family discourse in terms of their beliefs about language and language learning. In Family One John believed that routine talk about the day was beneficial as a means for expressing emotions and sharing events. In Family Two Kevin and Meredith suggested that by not simplifying language or providing explicit corrective feedback they were constructing a model language environment from which the children would benefit. In Family Three, Melanie indicated that establishing English as the family
language was important for including all family members and for the newest arrivals’ language development. However, the parents in these families also abandoned the practices associated with these beliefs in response to the children’s practices. John gave up the narrative routine, Kevin and Melanie simplified their language or provided more elaborations of words and word meanings in response to the children’s elicitations, and Melanie accepted Russian in family conversations when the children talked amongst themselves. This type of accommodation is most likely associated with efforts to establish affect in the family and show involvement with the children, but such responsiveness has also been found to be an aspect of middle-class, college-educated childrearing practices.

In early language socialization studies, researchers found that parents varied across cultures in the amount and type of linguistic accommodation they showed to language-learning children. Schieffelin and Ochs (1984) summarized the ways in which Anglo-American white middle-class parents accommodate to their children: by simplifying speech in a child-directed register, by richly interpreting child utterances, and by expanding on or paraphrasing child utterances (pp. 287-288). These strategies socialize children into practices involving ambiguity (that utterances can have more than one meaning), authority (that some interlocutors are in positions to interpret meanings of utterances), and negotiation (that the child has a right to agree or disagree). Importantly, they differ from strategies used by parents in other cultures and social classes. Kaluli and Samoan caregivers, for example, did not simplify their speech to young children but used routines designed to “fit” children into adult
practices, and these strategies were related to the multiparty discourse typical of early interactions of children in these societies as well as cultural beliefs about children and children’s language learning.

I have argued in the chapters above that the accommodations the middle-class Anglo-American parents in this study make to their children are evidence for the ways in which children can influence language socialization processes in the home. It could also be argued that the same middle-class values of accommodation to children that were found in the early language socialization studies also influenced the processes found in this study. The parents’ willingness to accommodate to older adoptees might be related to cultural values of running a child-centered home or meeting a child’s demonstrated needs. Learning, for these children then, encompasses not only acquiring linguistic, pragmatic, and sociocultural knowledge, but also taking on the roles or identities that provide access to that knowledge. The data here suggest that the adoptees in this study are in the process of learning how to be agentive in the family interactions and what types of agency or willfulness are acceptable and even beneficial in interactions with adults in middle-class American culture. Through subtle processes of initiation and compromise, the children in these families find ways to express individual identities, shape the family identity, and establish themselves as individuals with some authority in a specific community of practice. Knowing how to take on this type of agentive role and having the sense of confidence needed to accomplish such interactions can have implications for these children’s performance in contexts outside the home, specifically school.
In a comparison of two English language learners in a mainstream kindergarten classroom, Hawkins (2005) found that one child (Anton) was more successful at constructing a “good learner” identity in the classroom than a second child from a higher social class and subsequently had greater linguistic and academic gains at the end of the school year. More specifically, Hawkins found that Anton’s proactive strategies to recruit other students in interactions provided him access to language practice, scaffolding, and affiliations with school and schooling (three routes to English language development and learning identified in the study). Hawkins concluded that these strategies were engendered in home interactions between Anton and his sister, who was more familiar with the practices of schooling:

The tools and experiences that Anton brought, together with his agency – [his] actions stemming from his understandings of this space and who he could (and wanted to) be within it – resonated with institutional views of successful learners and enabled him to claim an identity as a learner (p. 78).

Children’s agency in Hawkins’ study turned out to be an important part of the learning process and one that, importantly, seemed to be cultivated at home. Anton’s home situation was not similar to the middle-class families described in this study, but Hawkins determined from home visits and interviews with his mother that his sister was primarily responsible for his socialization. These findings once again reinforce the notion that children bring external socialization to the home sphere and, taken together with the findings from the current study, that middle-class values are reproduced in schooling structures (Heath, 1983; Michaels, 1981). That is, values
Anton inherits from his sister, which are passed from the school environment to the home, help him develop interactional and learning strategies that assist him in the classroom setting.

In the current study, Dima, the older child in Family One, exhibits the most resistant strategies in response to his father. His resistance to the narrative elicitations of the bad thing/good thing routine make an explicit statement about the type of discourse activities in which he wants to participate in the family conversations, and even his compromises in this activity take a muted form of resistance (i.e. by using the routine to tell “complaint” stories). Interestingly, of all the children in the study Dima was consistently praised for his academic success. John noted that he was above grade level in reading, and Dima often demonstrated his academic expertise by discussing science experiments, math problems, and other topics learned at school in the home recordings, sometimes as a way to show he knew more than his father.

Dima’s school success can be related in part to his prior schooling and the early use of Russian in the Sondermans' home (Cummins, 2003). However, as I argue in Fogle (2008a) there is evidence that John’s scaffolding techniques and overall discourse environment (e.g., focus on literacy) in this home promoted the acquisition of academic language. Here I have expanded on this perspective by showing that Dima achieves agency in conversations with his father and that this ability to influence the family interactions and an adult authority figure in particular can contribute to learning the types of strategies needed for success in the classroom (though John
sometimes complained that Dima was too forceful in interaction with his peers at school).

This is not to say that all children exposed to such socialization would become good students or that children who are not exposed to such socialization can’t become good students. One of the limitations of the current study is the lack of data from the school context and concrete evidence linking the home socialization processes to school performance. I am also not suggesting that parents should accommodate to all of their children’s initiations and direction. Rather, the findings of this study incorporated with discussions of middle-class Anglo-American socialization patterns and other studies of child identity suggest that children’s agency in language learning, which seems to be valued in the classroom environment, might be socialized through home interactions where children are given freedom to exercise such agency in a supportive environment. Further research focusing on child strategies in particular in family settings from different ethnic groups and social classes as well as classrooms could help to better illuminate how parental accommodation to child directions vary and what implications these patterns have for home-school connections and other larger social processes. In addition, the findings of the current study support calls for expansion of the notion of “competence” in language socialization research (Baquedano-López, 2002), a point to which I will now turn.

*From the everyday to the long-term*

In this dissertation I have shown how children can take on positions of relative power to parents by using initiating or resisting strategies and how long-term family
identities can be constructed through the repetition of everyday routines as well as reference to other times, particularly in narrative activities. At the outset of the dissertation, I discussed the ways in which learning could be conceived through the metaphors of “activity,” “participation,” and “identity”. Here I will review the perspectives on identity formation that have been discussed in connection with each family’s data and suggest how these findings might connect with notions of children’s agency and processes of learning.

The concept of identity and positive identity formation has played an important role in education research. Bilingual children have been found to perform better in valorized environment such as two-way immersion programs (Cummins, 2001); discontinuities between home and school identities have been found to lead to school drop-outs and other perceived social problems (Lin, 2008); while establishing affiliative identities with schooling has been found to facilitate second language acquisition and school performance (Hawkins, 2005; Willett, 1995). In addition, identity and specifically constructing an adoption narrative, has been viewed as important to the mental health and school success of child adoptees (Grovetant, 1997). In this study I have shown how second language-learning children construct discursive identities on three main levels in the supportive environment of the family: through taking on different speaker roles, through the repetitions of these roles and stances in everyday interactions, and through reference to distant times and places.

Prior studies of language socialization have focused on speaker roles and participation structures to show how children and other novices acquire communicative
competence through routines. These studies show the importance of examining
speaker roles in family interactions and the repetitions of these roles over time. They
do not, however, touch on what other types of identities can be established in families
when family members break away from these routines.

Speaker roles, identified through patterns of initiation and response, were
found to be important in the current study in constructing everyday power relations in
the family conversations and negotiating the types of discourse activities that took
place in those interactions. The repetition of these roles and the evaluative stances
that went along with them (e.g., persistently resisting another speaker’s elicitations)
led to constructions of family identities such as Dima, a preteen boy, being
“unwilling” to talk about himself. Such repetitions of the everyday are considered to
be elemental, in terms of the individual, to making up a coherent “self” (Lemke,
2000) and in terms of the family are characterized by Garrett and Baquedano-López
(2002) as the “warp and woof of human sociality” (p. 343).

While the mundane and the routine serve to explain continuity across
generations in a culture or a self across contexts, focus on the everyday has in some
ways precluded consideration of the momentary, ephemeral events that might also
have importance in socialization processes. Surprising, out-of-the-ordinary, or
innovative events (including conversations) can have lasting effects on people’s
beliefs and practices although they might not hold the same type of analytical power
as uncovering patterns in repetition. Experiencing a war, the loss of a loved one, or
other type of trauma are extreme examples of out-of-the-ordinary events that can
influence a person’s developmental trajectory. In the same way, unexpected conversations or memorable utterances such as confessions of love, jokes, denigrations or criticisms, and other speech acts can stay with an individual over time and influence future behaviors.

In these data I have singled out talk about pre-adoption time in Ukraine and Russia to show how family members in two of the families broke from regular routines to construct a shared history or at least part of a shared adoption narrative. These out-of-the-ordinary instances, I argue, allow for connection of the momentary discussion (in these cases about the meanings of words) to longer timescales through reference to the distant past. These narrative activities, which were not everyday events, allowed the family members to conceptualize themselves in relation to the current time and place, i.e. urban, middle-class English-speaking families in the United States. Because the process of becoming a family across times and places is of immediate importance in these internationally adoptive families, the need to step out of everyday routines to do this kind of discursive identity work on longer timescales is apparent.

In much the same way that constructing an adoption narrative or telling stories about Ukraine and Russia gave the children in Families One and Two a way to connect their pasts to their present lives, Lesya and Lena in Family Three used Russian in communication with the other adoptees to symbolically maintain a connection with the past time and place. As a heritage language within this family, the use of Russian served to remind family members of where the children came from.
and what they knew and did before their arrival to the United States. These examples of the children taking an agentive role in finding opportunities for long-term identity construction connect with what Grovetant et al. (2007) describe as a “integrated” or unified adoptee self identity that can have benefits in schooling and post-school careers. The findings from this study contribute to this line of research by showing how such narratives are initiated and constructed in the family interactions as well as the fact that other types of language use such as maintaining a heritage language can contribute to developing a sense of self.

While these findings have important implications for adoption research, they can also be applied to research on other child second language learners. Recent studies in American Indian heritage language communities have found that children often have positive attitudes toward their native languages and even criticize members of older generations who no longer speak the languages in day-to-day interactions (McCarty, 2009). These attitudes and the efforts younger generations have been found to make in revitalizing heritage languages have led researchers such as McCarty to refer to children in these communities as “the youngest policymakers.” Connecting the past with the present then has implications for all heritage language learners who have an interest in revitalizing or maintaining their languages or even creating a sense of self across discontinuities such as language shift, migration, or other sociopolitical/sociohistorical disruptions. In these data I have shown that the children are able to begin to do this through self-initiated narrative activities and language negotiations that maintain the use of their native languages.
Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed how parents and school-age international adoptees establish intersubjectivity through patterns of initiation and accommodation, how these patterns constitute participation in the family sphere, and how such participation relates to identity construction and learning. I discussed ways in which children in these families were able to cultivate a sense of agency in interaction with more powerful adults and how such agency could have benefits in the classroom environment. Learning, in this context, encompasses more than acquiring linguistic forms and structures, pragmatic norms, or even discourse structures. In these families, learners’ participation in an agentive way through direction, negotiation, and resistance and the accommodating responses provided by parents constitutes learning as a process through which children take on roles that match up with cultural expectations potentially replicated in mainstream schooling for expressing individualism and being proactive.

In conclusion, this study confirms that home, at least in these U.S. families, is rarely a place of idyllic harmony and parenting is by no means a peaceful process of passing on one’s beliefs and ways of being to one’s children. Instead, being a parent and being a child in a family together require negotiation as well as the motivation and tacit agreement to participate and to learn. By viewing home language socialization processes from the perspective of the influence of children themselves (through their developing language competencies, communicative strategies, and
outside socialization), we have a better picture of how the construction of identities and child-initiated discourse practices play a role in learning.
Appendix

Transcription Guidelines (Tannen et al., 2007)

((words)) Double parentheses enclose transcriber’s comments, in italics.

/words/ Slashes enclose uncertain transcription.

Carriage return Each new line represents an intonation unit.

- A hyphen indicates a truncated word or adjustment within an intonation unit, e.g., repeated word, false start.

? A question mark indicates a relatively strong rising intonation (interrogative)

! An exclamation mark indicates rising intonation (exclamatory)

. A period indicates a falling, final intonation

, A comma indicates a continuing intonation

.. Dots indicate silence

: A colon indicates an elongated sound

CAPS Capitals indicate emphatic stress

<laugh> Angle brackets enclose descriptions of vocal noises, e.g., laughs, coughs, crying.

Words [words] [words] Square brackets enclose simultaneous talk
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