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“How Do I Teach My Kids My Broken Armenian?”:

A Study of Eastern Armenian Heritage Language Speakers in Los Angeles

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy  
in Near Eastern Languages and Cultures

by

Shushan Karapetian

2014

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2014

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

“How Do I Teach My Kids My Broken Armenian?”:

A Study of Eastern Armenian Heritage Language Speakers in Los Angeles

by

Shushan Karapetian

Doctor of Philosophy in Near Eastern Languages and Cultures

University of California, Los Angeles, 2014

Professor Peter S. Cowe, Co-Chair

Professor Olga Kagan, Co-Chair

This dissertation introduces Armenian, specifically Eastern Armenian in the Los Angeles context, into the landscape of heritage languages in the United States. Given the lack of knowledge about Armenian as a heritage language, both in the fields of Heritage Language Research and Armenian Studies, this study offers the first comprehensive examination of Armenian heritage language speakers in a variety of capacities. Each chapter presents a dimension of its own, highlighting particular qualities of this group of speakers while expanding knowledge about heritage languages and speakers in general. The study begins by assessing the overall landscape of Armenian and Armenians in Los Angeles, including an evaluation of the linguistic presence and use of the language, as well as signs of loss. The research then examines the incomplete acquisition process among heritage speakers by delineating linguistic features in

the categories of phonology, morphology, register, and borrowings from English. Additionally, patterns of language use are investigated with the proposal of multiple domains of linguistic compartmentalization. Moreover, this study explores the persistent anxiety connected with using the heritage language and identifies the damaging cycle it generates. Finally, this research considers inconsistent attitudes and beliefs concerning the heritage language with an analysis of the impact of competing majority and minority language ideologies.

The primary source of data for this dissertation stems from a series of in-depth audio-recorded interviews with college-age heritage language learners of Eastern Armenian, consisting of questions related to background, education, use of, and attitude to the heritage language. The entire corpus of interviews was transcribed and analyzed using qualitative research conventions and methods.

The dissertation of Shushan Karapetian is approved.

Michael David Cooperson

Peter S. Cowe, Committee Co-chair

Olga Kagan, Committee Co-chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2014

## DEDICATION

For Ani and her soon-to-be sister

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- Karapetian, S. (June, 2011). *Armenian for heritage students*. Textbook published by Center for World Languages, University of California, Los Angeles. Los Angeles, CA.
- Karapetian, S. (May, 2010). *The unique case of Armenian in the National Heritage Language Learner Survey*. Paper presented at the “The Real California Gold” Indigenous and Immigrant Heritage Languages of California, Second Language Acquisition Institute, UC Davis. Davis, CA.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Հայ լեզուն տունն է հայուն աշխարհիս չորս ծագերուն,  
Ուր կը մտնէ ամէն հայ իբրև տանտէր հարազատ,

...

Հո՛ն է միայն, որ կրնայ գտնել ամէն հայ կրկին  
Խաժամուժին մէջ օտար կորսնցուցած իր հոգին,  
Անցյալն անհուն և ներկան, նույնիսկ մթին ապագան...

The Armenian language is the home of the Armenian in the four ends of the world,  
Where every Armenian enters as a genuine homeowner,

...

It is only there that every Armenian can find once again  
His soul, lost in the foreign rabble,  
The immense past and the present, even the obscure future...

Mushegh Ishkhan, Armenian Poet, 1914-1990

#### **Introduction**

The emerging field of heritage language education has covered much ground in the past few decades by identifying special characteristics of heritage learners, proposing some suitable pedagogical approaches, and forming profiles of heritage learners of individual languages in hopes of creating cross-language theoretical frameworks (Valdés 2001; Montrul 2007; Polinsky & Kagan 2007; Carreira 2004). Languages such as Spanish, Chinese, Korean, and Russian, for example, have been studied, while Armenian, on the other hand, has been virtually untouched. This dissertation aims to fill that precise gap of knowledge on Armenian as a heritage language in the U.S., which has not been directly and comprehensively addressed by scholars of either Armenian Studies or Heritage Language Research. Therefore, the main objective of this project is centered on positioning Eastern Armenian on the sociocultural and linguistic map of heritage languages, using Los Angeles as a sample, which is home to the third largest Armenian



community outside of the Republic of Armenia. Enriching both Armenian Studies and Heritage Language Education, this study adds to the growing body of knowledge about immigrant languages, while identifying the unique features of this particular group.

### **Heritage Languages and Heritage Language Speakers/Learners in the U.S.**

Linguistic diversity is not a recent novelty in the history of this country as the geographic area that is today the U.S. has always been ethnolinguistically diverse. In addition to the English, early settlers included French, German, and Spanish-speaking populations, not to mention the 300 plus Native American languages that were spoken here. “Technically, all languages besides those spoken by indigenous Native Americans are in fact historically immigrant languages, and immigration figures prominently in today’s discussions about language diversity” (Potowski 2010: 10). Given this history of linguistic pluralism, it is surprising that unlike Canada or Australia, which provide a more established model for the issue, the U.S. lacks a comprehensive language policy (Van Deusen-Scholl 2003). Even without an official national language, most Americans speak English as their native language and live in a “linguistic culture” which promotes and supports “the use of English to the exclusion of almost all other languages” (Schiffman 2005: 121). The numerous non-English languages that historically and currently form a fundamental part of our society are some type of a heritage language for those who are speakers/learners of that language. Heritage languages have appropriately been divided into three groups: indigenous heritage languages, colonial heritage languages, and immigrant heritage languages (Fishman 2001). For the purposes of this dissertation, we will focus on the last group.

A heritage language has very unique features that set it apart from both a native language and a foreign language. Unlike foreign language acquisition, heritage language acquisition has its roots in the home, whereas traditionally, foreign language acquisition is set in the classroom

(Heritage Language Research Priority Conference Report 2000). In terms of order of acquisition, a heritage language is first for an individual, but is incompletely acquired due to a switch to another dominant language (Polinsky 2008). Finally, a heritage language has a particular family relevance and/or a personal connection for the individual (Fishman 2001).

Now that we have identified the parameters of a heritage language, we can move on to the challenging discussion on how to define heritage language speakers and learners. For the purposes of this project and for most scholars in the field of heritage language education, Guadalupe Valdés' definition has become the classic and most widely accepted characterization of this group in the U.S. She defines a heritage language speaker as someone who is "raised in a home where a non-English language is spoken, who speaks or at least understands the language, and who is to some degree bilingual in that language and English" (2001). Particularly for this definition, the term bilingual refers to circumstantial bilinguals who acquire and use two or more languages to meet their everyday communicative needs. Bilingualism is viewed as a continuum of proficiency over time during which the domains and proficiency levels of the two languages are subject to constant change (Valdés 2005).

Until a few decades ago, a student had very limited, if any options of studying or being encouraged to study his/her heritage language. The field of language pedagogy was totally unprepared for this new group of learners who wished to study languages other than the commonly taught foreign languages (Spanish, French, German), but instead showed interest in their heritage language. Even the term heritage language was a novelty. Over the past few decades foreign language enrollments at U.S. institutions of higher education have undergone a dramatic shift from the traditional European languages toward less commonly taught languages. These enrollments tend to correlate significantly with renewed interest by speakers of immigrant

languages in studying the languages of their ancestors. As a result, heritage language instruction has slowly become a legitimate sub-discipline within the field of foreign language education, attempting to provide useful theory and pedagogical approaches on how best to instruct these students. In this process, one of the most difficult tasks has been how to define a heritage language learner (HLL). Is a HLL someone who possesses some kind of linguistic proficiency in the heritage language (HL)? Or is it someone who has a historical or personal connection to the language? How do we account for the vast range of differences among HLLs? In addition, for those who do have some kind of proficiency, how does the proficiency of HLLs compare to the skills of native speakers, on the one hand, and foreign language learners (FLL), on the other?

Scholars in the field of heritage language education have offered many possible answers to the questions above with various scopes and layers of acceptance. At the most basic level, a heritage language learner is a person studying a language who has some proficiency in or a cultural connection to that language through family, community, or country of origin. More specifically, heritage language learners can be divided into two large categories depending on whether they fit the broad or narrow definition. According to the *broad definition*, heritage language learners are those who have been raised with a strong cultural connection to a particular language, usually through family interaction (cf. Fishman). Learners in this category have some sort of personal or ancestral connection but lack linguistic proficiency. On the other hand, the learners who belong in the *narrow definition* are those who have been exposed to a particular language in childhood but did not learn it to a full capacity because another language became dominant (cf. Valdés). Thus, actual linguistic proficiency (to whatever degree) for this group is the defining factor (Polinsky and Kagan 2007). Hornberger and Wang adopt an ecological view of HLL identity and propose a new definition particularly in the U.S. context which states that

“HLLs are individuals with familial or ancestral ties to a language other than English who exert their agency in determining if they are HLLs of that language” (2008). Carreira, a leading scholar in this field, suggests that HLLs are students whose identity and/or linguistic needs differ from those of SLLs by virtue of having a family background in the heritage language or culture. She argues that unlike first language learners, HLLs do not receive sufficient exposure to their language and culture to fulfill basic identity and linguistic needs and as a result pursue language learning (2004).

### **General Features of Heritage Speakers/Learners**

For more recent immigrants, heritage learners belong to the 1.5 generation, which represents those who were born in the host country and have learned the heritage language from many sources such as family members, peers, and even sometimes through formal education in primary grade schools in their home countries. Many other HLLs, classified as 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> generation, were born in the host country and have come to interact with the heritage language intermittently and primarily through immediate family members. The amount of exposure to the heritage language differs widely from one learner to another as some have very limited input from the environment, such as sole contact with non-English speaking grandparents, while others use it on a daily basis in speaking with parents, watching television programs, and even using the Internet in the HL.

The National Heritage Language Resource Center (NHLRC) at UCLA, one of 15 Title VI National Language Resource Centers in the U.S. and the only one with a sole focus on heritage languages, conducted an on-line survey of heritage learners of 22 languages and over 1,800 learners across the nation to better understand their backgrounds, attitudes, and goals in studying

their heritage language. Maria Carreira and Olga Kagan, the creators of this survey, analyzed the results from 2007-2009 and presented the following typical characteristics.

A general profile of HLLs emerges as a student who (1) acquired English in early childhood, after acquiring the HL; (2) has limited exposure to the HL outside the home; (3) has relatively strong aural and oral skills but limited literacy skills; (4) has positive HL attitudes and experiences; and (5) studies the HL mainly to connect with communities of speakers in the U.S. and to gain insights into his or her roots (2011: 62).

Not surprisingly, following the trend among foreign language learners in general, female students' responses comprised the greater part at 64%, with male responses at 36%. The majority of HLLs who answered the survey, 62.4%, was born in the U.S. or arrived in this country before their sixth birthday (18%) (Carreira & Kagan 2011). In regards to language use, the overwhelming majority of HLLs (70.2%) reported exclusively using their heritage language up until age 5, the usual age when most children start school in the U.S. After this, the use of the HL naturally experienced a sharp decline with two distinct patterns: slightly more than half of the respondents continued to use their HL alongside English, while a smaller but significant number reported using English to the exclusion of their HL (Carreira & Kagan 2011). The following table is a direct replica of the graphic representation on language use data from the Heritage Language Survey Report (Carreira, Jensen & Kagan 2009).

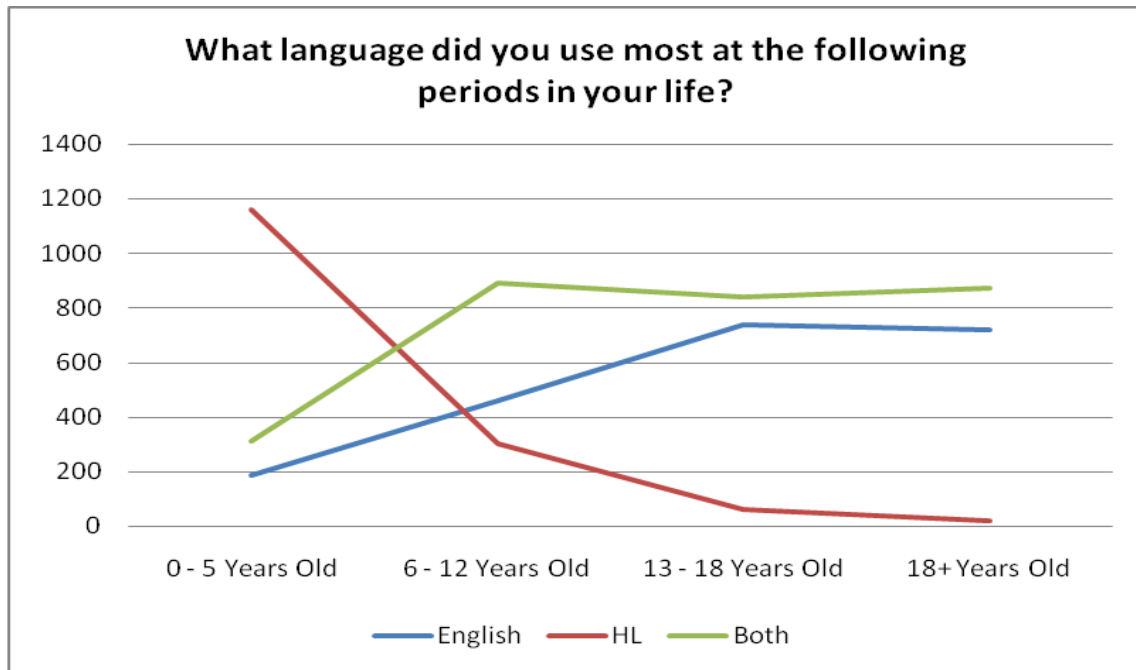


Figure 1.1: Language use patterns during different periods of learners' lives (Carreira et al. 2009)

The development of the heritage language and English is very uneven. As children, heritage speakers speak or hear the heritage language at home and in their immediate communities, but with few exceptions, they receive their formal education entirely in English. Due to the wealth and diversity of input available in the dominant language, heritage speakers usually develop full literacy and mastery of the complex system of registers, repertoires, styles and varieties of English, while the heritage language remains restricted to the home and the HL community, used primarily for casual, low-level, informal interactions requiring limited linguistic repertoires (Valdés 2001).

Additionally, the language used in the home is not identical to the literary and prestigious standard considered as the *official* variety of the language used in formal discourse in the homeland or taught in a language classroom. Heritage speakers are typically only exposed to the features of the language most appropriate for intimate, private, and everyday interactions that take place in the home among family and community members. This encapsulates a narrow

range of colloquial registers and styles characterized by the use of limited lexical and syntactic alternatives. To complicate matters even further, the language received in the home and the HL community, especially for U.S. born speakers from immigrant backgrounds, may often be a community variety in contact with English and other varieties of the heritage language that is quite different from the monolingual standard spoken in the homeland. A heritage language undergoes a great degree of change through lexical and structural borrowing because of contact with the dominant language. Additionally, as Penny (2000) explains: “In immigrant communities, the various incoming varieties of the heritage language may have converged to produce a new dialect through processes involving accommodation, the development of interdialectalisms, leveling, and simplification” (cited in Valdés 2005: 417).

Considering all of the factors mentioned above, the development of the heritage language and English is quite imbalanced. Whereas heritage speakers usually have mastery of English due to access to continuous formal and standardized education, the heritage language remains underdeveloped in comparison. The figure below from Valdés (2001) provides a useful visual for the disparities in the linguistic capacity of English and the heritage language among heritage speakers in immigrant communities.

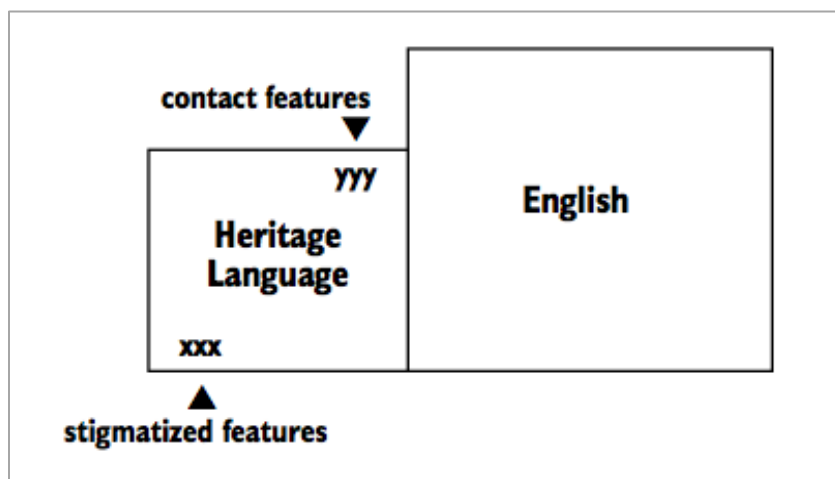


Figure 1.2: Language development of a bilingual heritage language speaker (Valdés 2001)

As can be seen from the graphic representation, in comparison to English the heritage language is incompletely acquired and contains both stigmatized features due to non-standard or non-prestige home varieties, as well as contact features due to interaction with English and other varieties of the heritage language. The uneven development of the two languages leads heritage speakers to manifest very different capabilities.

Within the heterogeneous group of speakers there is extreme variation in the range of skills. At one end of the spectrum there are very low-proficiency speakers with very basic oral skills limited to casual and informal registers and at the other there are very advanced speakers with a vast array of abilities in the heritage language. While understanding the difficulty in providing some type of uniform profile for such a diverse group, there are some general characteristics that apply to most HLLs. Usually heritage students lack formal training and, as a result, have no literacy in the heritage language. Their language skills are often unbalanced, with advanced levels of language comprehension and intermediate levels of production. Many heritage language students often speak nonprestige variants such as a rural or stigmatized variety of their heritage language (Valdés 2005). In addition, their oral capabilities are limited to a narrow repertoire of styles and registers (Achugar 2003; Schwartz 2003). These students have proficiency in casual and informal registers, but usually lack reading and writing skills, along with the ability to use formal and academic registers (Valdés 2001). As research demonstrates with specific examples from Russian, Chinese, Japanese and Spanish, the skills of HLLs are somewhere below native speakers and above FLLs. When all three groups are compared, the linguistic abilities of low-proficiency HLLs are similar to those of FLLs, but higher-level HLLs outperform even advanced FLLs (Isurin 2008; Weger-Guntharp 2006; Kondo-Brown 2005; Lynch 2008).



Polinsky and Kagan in their article “Heritage Languages: In the ‘Wild’ and in the Classroom” discuss the results of research on lower-proficiency speakers in order to identify recurrent features of heritage languages in phonology, morphology, and syntax (2007). They note that despite the appearance of great variation among heritage speakers, they fall along a continuum based upon the speakers’ distance from the baseline language. It is crucial to note that the baseline language for most heritage speakers is not the formal standard of the language as promoted by schooling, media, and literature, but rather the language that the speaker was exposed to at home. This issue poses a need to establish the baseline for each particular heritage language. Moreover, the “discrepancies between their spoken language and the educated norm taught in the classroom may lead some instructors to discount their knowledge rather than value it” (Polinsky & Kagan 2007).

In regards to phonetics and phonology, the general impression is that even low-proficiency heritage speakers may sound native-like (Polinsky & Kagan 2007; Benmamoun, Montrul, & Polinsky 2010; Benmamoun, Montrul, & Polinsky 2013). At the morphological level, heritage speakers tend to over-regularize morphological paradigms, with the elimination of irregular and infrequent forms. In addition to overgeneralizing in both form and meaning, heritage speakers are also extremely good at maintaining fossilized forms of high-frequency items. They also show a much smaller range of morphological case distinctions when compared to the baseline. The flexibility of word order in languages which allow this is lost due to heritage speakers’ reduction of case marking and as a result dependence on strict word order. Heritage speakers also have difficulty maintaining syntactic dependencies pertaining to a more abstract level of syntactic representation (Polinsky & Kagan 2007).

## **Motivation**

The motivations behind learning a second language represent another area of examination in which HLLs clearly differ from FLLs. Usually FLLs have external motivations for learning a second language, whereas HLLs are driven by intrinsic desires. The two types of external motivations identified in second language acquisition are instrumental and integrative (Gardner & Lambert 1972). Instrumental motivation revolves around practical or concrete gains and can include the ability to communicate in a foreign country, satisfy a college credit or requirement, enhance employment prospects, etc. Integrative motivation is characterized by the language learners' positive attitudes and desire to assimilate with the target community and culture. In stark contrast to the above, HLLs attend heritage language classes with different motivations than those of FLLs (He 2006; Brinton et al 2008; Chinen & Tucker 2005; Cho et al 1997). HLLs usually attach intrinsic value to attending heritage language classes. They may derive this intrinsic value from improving their knowledge about the home culture, communicating with extended family in the U.S. and in the home country, finding friends who share the same language and culture, etc. These differences are particularly important since motivation is considered one of the most important aspects of learning a second language (Krashen 1982; Gardner & Lambert 1972).

## **Language Socialization**

The analytic framework of language socialization has been another fruitful lens for examining how learners acquire and maintain their heritage languages and the symbiotic social and cultural processes that accompany heritage language learning (He 2012). This field of study incorporates many disciplines such as linguistics, anthropology, sociology, and psychology crucial to understanding the relationship between communicative and cultural practices (Atoofi

2011). As formulated by Ochs and Schieffelin, language socialization is concerned with two aspects of human behavior: first, it investigates how novices are socialized to use language, and second, it explores how language is used to socialize novices to become competent members of their society (Ochs 1990). This approach concentrates on the language used by and to novices and the relations between this language use and the larger cultural contexts of communication – local theories and epistemologies concerning social order, local ideologies and practices concerning socializing novices, relationships between the novice and the expert, and so forth (He 2012). Research using the theoretical framework of language socialization has focused on analyzing the organization of communicative practices through which novices acquire socio-cultural knowledge and interactional competence and on the open-ended, negotiated, contested characters of the interactional routine as a resource for growth and change (Garrett & Baquedano-Lopez 2002). This type of framework conceptualizes heritage language development along some important dimensions. Language acquisition and socialization are viewed as an integrated process. Heritage language learners' acquisition of linguistic forms requires a developmental process of delineating and organizing contextual dimensions in culturally sensible ways. Language acquisition is viewed as increasing competence in both the formal and functional potential. Finally, the transmission of HL takes place not merely in formal settings (e.g. classrooms) but also, and perhaps more importantly, informally (e.g., across generations at home and in the communities) (He 2012). Kulick and Schieffelin stress that language socialization studies require an ethnographic design, need to have a longitudinal perspective, and demonstrate the acquisition (or lack) of particular linguistic or cultural features over time and across contexts (2004).

## **Language Attitude, Ethnic Identity, and Language Ideology**

In addition to serving as a means of communication, a language comes to index an ethnicity as ideologies of language connect the language in question with the identity of a particular group or speaker (e.g. Kroskrity 2004; Lippi-Green 1997; Silverstein 1998). Irvine (1989: 255) defines language ideology as “the cultural (and sub-cultural) system of ideas about social and linguistic relationships, together with their loading of moral and political interests.” Language ideologies act as interpretive links between a sociocultural context and linguistic forms and resources (e.g. Kroskrity 2004), shaping the understanding, evaluation, and deployment of these forms and resources, from basic linguistic foci such as vocabulary choice (Silverstein 1998) to wider social and political foci such as the hierarchical ordering of languages and dialects within a community (e.g. Lippi-Green 1997). Irvine (1989) further notes that language ideologies are loaded with the moral and political interests of dominant cultural systems as well as those espoused by subcultures, and while those of the dominant group often assume hegemonic status and are supported by powerful institutions such as schools and media (Lippi-Green 1994), language ideologies that reflect the experiences of subordinate groups are also important and can provide a counterpoint to dominant ones.

In the U.S., as mentioned above, an established attitude regarding language that has a significant impact on the experience of immigrant groups is an ideology of English monolingualism that tends to exclude and marginalize HLs. “Mastery of English and the advantages this promises, in other words, is not neutral; it is linked to a negative valuation of HL retention as dominant language ideologies simultaneously underline the importance of English while devaluing minority languages” (Chick 2010). In this atmosphere, immigrant parents

quickly discover that the maintenance of a non-English language within an overwhelmingly English-dominant environment is an uphill battle.

In connecting language with ethnic identity, language ideologies are consistently employed by multiple community actors such as parents, language teachers, and speakers. Conflicting language ideologies and linguistic practices in regard to a HL often fracture along generational lines. Multiplicity with regard to ethnic identity and associated language ideologies and practices applies not only within and across communities and over time but also within individual social actors as they position themselves *vis-à-vis* the heritage and dominant cultures and languages (He 2008).

A linguistic dimension is very much in evidence in the ethnic identity development of minority youths that Hinton (2001) and Tse (1997) describe. They analyzed the autobiographies of second generation Asian Americans – in the case of Hinton, 250 linguistic autobiographies written by college students, and in the case of Tse, 39 autobiographies of college and post-college adults. The evolution these authors portray encompasses feelings of distance or affiliation toward the heritage community along with changing attitudes toward the HL that reflect the course of this development. The stage of “ethnic evasion” (Tse 1997) includes as a central component, the forging of an identity that negatively values the HL and emphasizes the desirability of English dominance. But for a majority, this phase is temporary and, over time, is followed by a more positive reevaluation of the HL and culture as stages of “ethnic emergence” and “ethnic identity incorporation” (Tse 1997) appear. In these latter two stages, knowledge or a desire for knowledge of the HL, often features prominently. Attitudes toward a HL, in other words, reflect conceptions of ethnic identity as they change and develop; a process that in turn

has significant consequences for the ways in which language skills in the HL are or are not maintained (He 2006).

As a result of the intimate link between language and ethnic identity, there are multiple benefits to heritage language acquisition. Studies demonstrate that the heritage language plays an important role in solidifying young immigrants' identity formation (Cho 2000; Cho, Cho, & Tse 1997). Learning a heritage language plays an important role in influencing heritage speakers' sense of identity and social interactions with their ethnic group. One study examined these variables among second generation Korean Americans (Cho 2000). The results showed that learning the heritage language positively affected the second generation Korean Americans' sense of identity, their confidence to associate with other Koreans in America, and their ability to interact with and relate to other Korean heritage language speakers (Cho 2000).

### **Armenian as a Heritage Language**

Given the rapid advancement in the field of heritage language education and the prominent presence of the Armenian community in the U.S., particularly in Los Angeles, it is quite striking that the topic of Armenian as a Heritage Language has not been approached as a vital source of examination, both for Armenian Studies and Heritage Language Research. The sole exception is the dissertation of Linda Godson, which investigates the impact of the age at which English becomes dominant for Western Armenian bilinguals in the U.S. and its effect on their vowel production in Western Armenian (2003). Results showed that English affects the Western Armenian vowel system but only for those vowels that are already close to English (a, e, i and not o and u) (Godson 2003). To my knowledge, there is no other work that isolates this group to present a comprehensive profile of Armenian speakers/learners as a dynamic heritage language community in the U.S.

A few works have examined Armenian-Americans as a “hidden” white minority with a focus on the processes of ethnic identity development, which certainly serves as a rich source of complementary literature. Anny Bakalian’s monograph *Armenian-Americans: From Being to Feeling Armenian* describes Armenian-Americans individually and collectively with two dominant themes: the assimilation of people of Armenian descent in the U.S. and their continued pride and identity in their ethnic heritage (1993)<sup>1</sup>. Bakalian (1993) devotes an entire chapter on the debate over language and the role it plays in the composition of Armenian ethnic identity. Similar inquiries that explore questions of assimilation and ethnic identity development among Armenian immigrants and their descendants in the U.S. include the doctoral dissertations of Kassabian (1987), Alexander (1997), and Jendian (2001). For example, a study of Armenian adolescents living in a metropolitan area in the Midwest revealed the importance of cultural markers such as the Armenian Genocide, the Diaspora, cultural preservation, and the Armenian language in the development of adolescent ethnic identity. Additionally, parents as well as social institutions play critical roles in ethnic socialization and identity development as adolescents grow older (Yazedjian 2008).

## **Data Sources, Participants, and Methods**

### *Interviews with Armenian Heritage Language Learners*

The primary source of data for this dissertation was the collection of audio-recorded interviews with 27 heritage language learners enrolled in a beginning Eastern Armenian course at UCLA during the Spring Quarters of 2010 and 2011. Students were selected on a voluntary basis and interviewed upon verbal and written consent, with the assurance of confidentiality and

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<sup>1</sup> Her sample is mainly comprised of Armenians living in the metropolitan New York/New Jersey area.

privacy<sup>2</sup>. Interviews were conducted and audio-recorded on the UCLA campus during the 12-month period between the spring of 2010 and 2011, in the privacy of the seminar room of the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures. The interviews were conducted in Eastern Armenian with the understanding that participants would attempt to communicate in the heritage language to the best of their ability, using English when they deemed it necessary to ensure comprehension. Each interview was approximately 35-45 minutes in length and consisted of questions related to background, education, use of, and attitude to the heritage language (see Appendix A). While guided questions were used to frame the overall topics, all interviews were carried out in an open-ended and informal manner allowing for varied directions, elaborations, and spontaneous introduction of new topics.

Of the 27 participants, 19 were female (70.4%) and 8 were male (29.6%). The ages of participants at the time of the interviews ranged from 18-24 years old, with an average age of 20.3. In terms of place of birth, 11 were born in the U.S., 14 were born in Armenia, 1 was born in Iran, and 1 in Georgia. For those born outside of the U.S., age at immigration ranged from 4 months to 15 years old, with an average age of arrival to the U.S. of 5.3. A basic profile of the participants (identified only with initials) including the information listed above as well parents' place of origin, parents' languages, and siblings is presented in Appendix B. It is important to highlight that the participants in the interviews were a self-selected group, both in terms of their enrollment in a heritage language course as well as their participation in this study. Not only did they share a similar demographic profile in terms of their age and educational status, but also in the agency demonstrated to study the heritage language and take part in a project related to its analysis.

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<sup>2</sup> IRB#12-001578-CR-00001



The entire corpus of interviews was transcribed following established research and transcription conventions (Duranti 1997; Ochs 1979; Sacks & Schegloff 1979). The decision to conduct the interviews in Armenian was based on one of the major objectives of this study, which was to obtain a live sample of heritage learners' speech. Therefore, extreme attention was applied during the transcription process to accurately recording the various qualities of learners' speech without inadvertently altering or correcting them. Features such as non-standard pronunciation or grammatical forms, pauses, re-starts, repetitions, code switching, as well as non-verbal elements (sighs or laughs) were carefully included.

The transcripts were analyzed using qualitative techniques as outlined in Saldaña's (2013) *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*, passing through numerous cycles of coding. The analytical process began with pre-coding data "by circling, highlighting, bolding, underlining, or coloring rich or significant participant quotes or passages" that stood out as "those 'codable moments' worthy of attention" (Saldaña 2013: 16). In the initial phases following the pre-coding stage, transcripts were marked with descriptive codes that summarized the primary topics of selected excerpts as well as in vivo codes, taken directly from participants' words (Saldaña 2013: 3-4). Gradually transcripts were marked and filtered for patterns and given conceptual and/or thematic labels, through which initial categories of information were generated. Since coding is an inherently cyclical process, involving not just labeling but linking, it leads the researcher from data to an idea, and from that idea to all the data pertaining to that idea (Saldaña 2013: 8). Therefore, once overarching themes and topics were selected for individual chapters, transcripts were re-read and recoded, particularly for Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6.

Numerous passages from the interviews have been incorporated in the various chapters of the dissertation, not only to provide concrete supporting evidence, but also to supplement the

narrative analysis of data with human voices. The passages have been presented in the original as they were transcribed, including all of the genuine features of the participants' speech, with the accompanying translation below. Although translating spoken interactions is quite challenging, I have attempted to capture the authenticity of the speakers' speech as much as possible. In the translations words that were originally uttered in English have been bolded while bracketed glosses of relevant or non-standard grammatical features have been included in italics. Under the translation of each passage, an identifying marker is included in the following manner in italics: *[initials of speaker, age at time of interview, place of birth, age at immigration, any other relevant information]*. In cases when multiple passages follow each other, they have been separated with a short line to facilitate the reading process.

#### *National Heritage Language Survey*

The ongoing National Heritage Language Survey mentioned above served as an important complementary source of data for this dissertation. The goal of the survey was to collect information from heritage language learners currently enrolled in post-secondary heritage language courses to better understand their backgrounds, attitudes, and goals in studying their language (Carreira et al. 2009). Over 1,800 responses have been collected nation-wide since the survey was opened to universities across the country in the academic year of 2006-2007. The survey was confidential, administered online through <http://surveymonkey.com>, and consisted of 45 discrete-point questions and two open-ended questions, probing students' particular experiences with their HL in school and their HL community. Data from the survey have been analyzed in two studies: the Heritage Language Survey Report available on the NHLRC website (Carreira et al. 2009) and a paper co-authored by the creators of the survey (Carreira & Kagan

2011), which served as extremely useful resources in providing a general profile of heritage language learners across languages.

Moreover, the data from this survey were especially useful as Armenian was among the 22 languages represented, with a total of 129<sup>3</sup> responses from Armenian heritage learners as of March 2014. The overwhelming majority of participants (92.1%) were students from UCLA, with 8.7% from Glendale Community College, and 0.8% from California State University, Northridge. Upon request, the staff at the NHLRC kindly extracted the Armenian responses and shared the data with me. The results of the 45 discrete-point questions were made available with statistical analyses and graphic representation via Survey Monkey. As for the open-ended responses, I read and coded them in the manner described above for the interviews. Both the general, nation-wide data from the survey (Carreira et al. 2009; Carreira & Kagan 2011) as well as the 129 Armenian responses were incorporated as supporting sources in the various chapters of this dissertation (particularly Chapters 4 and 5).

### *Task Forces*

Currently there are three Task Forces actively working in the Los Angeles Armenian community on issues related to improving Armenian instruction in Armenian schools and preserving Armenian language use community-wide (described extensively in Chapter 2). Due to my participation in two of these task forces, I inadvertently became a participant observer, acting both as a dedicated committee member as well as a researcher. With the permission of the organizers and committee members of the Task Forces, when appropriate, I have included notes from meetings, observations, data, as well as extracts from reports.

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<sup>3</sup> Not all 129 Armenian respondents answered each and every question. As a result, in some cases the total number of Armenian responses for a particular question may range from 120-129.

### *Other*

Since the inception of this study, I have made a point of attending any related talks, events, lectures, or programs dedicated to Armenian and Armenian speakers, as well as following any discussions or debates on the situation of Armenian in the homeland and the Diaspora, both in print and social media. Notes, observations, commentary, data, and quotes from these sources have been incorporated in various chapters as necessary. I have also conducted a number of phone and in-person interviews with Los Angeles community members, such as bookstore owners, television network directors, Armenian teachers, and school principals, which have been particularly useful for assessing the linguistic presence of Armenian in this community (see Chapter 2).

### **Chapter Breakdown**

Chapter 2 presents the overall landscape of Armenian in Los Angeles by providing an outline of the development of the Armenian language, a history of the multiple waves of Armenian immigration to the U.S., and the demographic presence of Armenians in the U.S., especially in Los Angeles County. More specifically, the linguistic presence and use of Armenian in this community is reviewed in the realms of social services, media, cultural events, and education (both in the public and private domains). Finally, signs of heritage language loss, particularly among second and third generation Armenian speakers are depicted based on census data and the evaluation of the goals and proceedings of multiple Task Forces currently dedicated to enhancing Armenian instruction and promoting Armenian language use in the Los Angeles community.

Chapter 3 examines the incomplete acquisition process among Armenian heritage speakers by delineating linguistic features in the categories of phonology, morphology, register, and borrowings from English. In addition to the presentation of specific elements of grammatical

fragmentation with ample examples from the interviews, several key driving forces that may contribute to the exhibition of non-target like features are proposed.

Chapter 4 explores language use patterns and the intricate factors that govern the choice of language among Armenian heritage speakers. After a review of the influence of generational status on heritage language proficiency and patterns of language use, four domains of linguistic compartmentalization are designated based on the categories of age, gender, medium, and space.

Chapter 5 investigates the role that family and HL community members play on heritage speakers' ability and desire to speak and develop their heritage language through assessing the impact of teasing, ridicule, error correction and criticism by more proficient speakers in specific social contexts. Stemming from prominent theories on language acquisition and development, this chapter explores the persistent anxiety connected with using the heritage language and the damaging cycle it generates.

Chapter 6 considers the inconsistent attitudes and beliefs that heritage speakers hold and are socialized into concerning Armenian. These divergent attitudes are explored with an analysis of the impact of competing majority and minority language ideologies. Moreover, the effects of the tension in trying to reconcile inherent contradictions in speakers' beliefs are examined as a form of cognitive dissonance.

Lastly, the conclusion reviews the findings of this study by assessing the implications of the results, and proposes future directions for research.

## CHAPTER 2

### ARMENIAN AND ARMENIANS IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY

#### **Introduction**

According to the 2008-2012 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Armenian is the 28<sup>th</sup> most commonly spoken non-English language in the U.S., the 8th in California, the 5<sup>th</sup> in Los Angeles County, and the first in the city of Glendale. This chapter will present the overall landscape of Armenian in Los Angeles County by providing a brief introduction to the development of the Armenian language, a history of the different waves of Armenian immigration to the U.S., and the demographic presence of Armenians in the U.S., with a focus on Los Angeles County. Furthermore, signs of language maintenance as indicated by the presence and use of Armenian in the realms of social services, media, cultural events, and education (both in the public and private domains) will be reviewed. Finally, signs of language loss, particularly among second and third generation Armenian speakers, will be depicted by using census data as well as in-depth discussion of the proceedings of three Task Forces currently dedicated to enhancing Armenian instruction and promoting Armenian language use in this community.

#### **Armenian Language**

The Armenian language comprises its own unique branch in the Indo-European language tree, going through several millennia of autonomous development before the inception of a written history (Hagopian 2005). Although Armenians possessed a long prewritten culture reflected in the wealth of literary activities conducted in other languages and a rich oral heritage (Thomson 2004), the written history of Armenian dates to the early 5<sup>th</sup> century. This significant step was accomplished by the efforts of the scholar Mashtots, also referred to as Mesrop by writers after his own time (Thomson 2004), who developed a writing system for the language of

this era, later called Classical Armenian and its written version, Grabar (Hagopian 2005). The alphabet is used to this day and called the Mesropian alphabet after its creator. During fifteen centuries of written history, Armenian went through several main periods (Hagopian 2005):

1. A.D. 5<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> cc: Classical Armenian and its written literary variety, Grabar, used as the dominant literary language until mid-19<sup>th</sup> century;
2. 12<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> cc: Middle Armenian;
3. 17<sup>th</sup> c to 1860s: Ashkharhabar (vernacular; lit. “of the world”);
4. Mid 19<sup>th</sup> c to modern times: Modern Armenian

Modern Armenian is comprised of the Eastern and Western literary standards. The pluricentric development of the language seems almost endemic, as it was not only caused by divergent historic linguistic developments (phonetic shift, morphological and syntactic changes), but also by historical and political factors in the history of the Armenian people (Dum-Tragut 2009; Cowe 1992). As a result of Armenia’s ambiguous geographic location on the highland between the Mediterranean, Black, and Caspian seas, the Armenian plateau became the buffer and coveted prize of rival empires (Hovannisian 2004). On the major thoroughfare between East and West, the country was frequently partitioned between the great powers on either side (Hovannisian 2004; Cowe 1992). The dynastic era of Armenian history, which spanned over some two thousand years (with interruptions), came to an end with the fall of the last independent Armenian kingdom (uniquely in lands outside of historic Armenia) in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century. Thereafter, historic Armenia was eventually partitioned between the Ottomans and the Persians and later on between the Ottomans and the Russians (Bournoutian 2006)<sup>4</sup>. Some

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<sup>4</sup> The next period of independence began with the first modern Armenian state (1918-1920). From 1921-1991 a small landlocked area, comprising about 10% of historic Armenia, became part of the Soviet Union. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 ushered in the period of the second independent Republic of Armenia.

Armenians, mostly peasants and minor craftsmen, remained in historic Armenia, led by churchmen and petty lords, while many others lived outside of the homeland in diasporic communities, which formed, increased or diminished as a result of invasions, massacres, revolutions, colonialism and nationalism (Bournoutian 2006).

The Armenian community in Constantinople, capital of the Ottoman Empire, became the vessel for the purification of Western Armenian. By the 19<sup>th</sup> century it had a population of around 125,000, many of whom had come from the provinces, bringing their various dialects that carried strong Turkish influences<sup>5</sup> (Oshagan 2004). Thus the need for a common, efficient, and purified language became more pressing. The intellectual elite, comprised of graduates from European universities, imbued with romanticism, nationalism, and social progress, set to work. “Garabed Utudjian, editor of *Masis*, the organ of the patriarchate; Nahabed Rusinian; Nigoghos Zorayan; Nigoghos Balian; and men of letters such as Krikor Odian and Minas Cheraz as well as Mekhitarist linguist Father Arsen Aydenian started the difficult task of forging a literary ashkharhabar from the popular vernacular” (Oshagan 2004: 155). Opposed by pro-grabar intellectuals and others who favored an ashkharhabar derived from grabar only, the struggle lasted for some 20 years, from 1860 to around 1880, but the ashkharhabar formed from the living language of the people was victorious<sup>6</sup> (Oshagan 2004).

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<sup>5</sup> Mkhitar Sebastatsi (1676-1749), the eponymous founder of the Armenian-Catholic monastic order, produced a grammar of the vernacular in two parts. “The first, of necessity, published in Turkish though by hallowed convention in Armenian script (1727), exposed the rudiments of phonology and morphology utilized in the vernacular largely of his native Sebastia (Sivas). Presumably, as he stresses its utility for the spoken idiom, he did not deem it useful to go to press with second volume written this time in simple Armenian which dealt with questions of style and syntax” (Cowe 1992: 328).

<sup>6</sup> Major breakthroughs in establishing the hegemony of Western Armenian include the publication in Smyrna (1840) of the first periodical in literary ashkharhabar, *Arshaluys Araratian* edited by Ghugas Baltasarian (Oshagan 2004), the *Critical Grammar of Ashkharhabar Modern Armenian Language* (1866) by Father Arsen Aydenian, prefixed with a history of the linguistic development of Armenian and a comparison of the four major dialect groups (Oshagan 2004; Cowe 1992), and the founding of the journal *Hayrenik* (1891) by young writers Arpiar Arpiarian, Levon Pashalian, and Arshag Chobanian (Oshagan 2004).



The formation of Modern Eastern Armenian took place in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century also through European contact and example, but with a more polycentric development. After the Russian-Persian war (1826-1828), the former Khanates of Erivan and Nakhijevan were united to form the Province of Armenia under the Russian Tsarist government (Hovannisian 2004). The founding of important and prestigious centers of learning such as the Lazarian Academy in Moscow (1815) and the Nersisian School in Tiflis (1824) served as the foci of Armenian culture and language. The most liberal-minded political activists, poets, and intellectuals who would soon spearhead the cultural renaissance in Russian/Eastern Armenia typically comprised the student body and faculty of both prestigious centers. These enlightened leaders realized the urgency of educating and upgrading the masses for which they needed an effective means of communication. “Thus the first steps in forging a new literary ashkharhabar were taken in the Lazarian and Nersisian colleges, where teachers actively studied the dialects of the students from various regions of Armenia, then purified them of foreign borrowings and gradually developed a common language understandable by all” (Oshagan 2004: 150). By 1846 Stepan Nazarian had written a book in defense of the new literary ashkharhabar, declaring that the dialect of Ararat district should serve as the basis for the future language. The first publications in the new standard developed by the Nersisian School were not broadly accepted and even publicly persecuted by public authorities of Tsarist Armenia; even new schoolbooks were banned from the classrooms (Dum-Tragut 2009). The first literary work in Modern Eastern Armenian, *Wounds of Armenia*<sup>7</sup>, written by Khachatur Abovian (1809-1848), who had studied at the

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<sup>7</sup> “The narrative of the novel is written in an idiom understood throughout the plain of Ararat, while the dialogue for greater liveliness and authenticity is couched in the dialect of his native village of Kanaker” (Cowe 1992: 331).

German University of Dorpat (Tartu)<sup>8</sup>, was also immediately forbidden and only published posthumously in Tiflis in 1858. Similar to the situation of Western Armenian, this period is characterized by the “grapaykar,” the conflict between the revival of Classical Armenian and the rise of the vernacular. This polemical struggle continued until 1855 with the publication of Rafayel Patkanian’s (who used the penname Kamar-Katipa) poetry in ashkharhabar, which assured that form’s final victory (Oshagan 2004). In 1860 Mikayel Nalbandian attempted to describe the new standard independent from the paradigms of Classical Armenian. Ten years later, Stepanos Palasarian published his seminal grammar *A General Theory of the New Literary Armenian Language, Eastern Armenian*<sup>9</sup>,” opening a new era by ensuring the triumph of Modern Eastern Armenian and its spread in Tsarist Armenia (Dum-Tragut 2009).

The proliferation of newspapers in both media, the development of a network of schools where modern Armenian was taught, and the emergence of literary works in these modern versions increasingly legitimized the existence of the two literary forms. By the 1860s both standards of modern Armenian prevailed over Grabar and functioned in the two different cultural spheres. Apart from some phonetic, morphological, and grammatical differences, the largely common vocabulary and similar rules of grammatical fundamentals allow users of one variant to understand the other somewhat easily with some exposure<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> Abovian’s tenure in Dorpat and his experience as a teacher convinced him of the need to employ the vernacular as a literary medium. Inspired by German romanticism, he wrote inflamed and romantic works, but soon realized that his public, the common people, needed to be educated and the Armenian writer had to use the people’s language in order to be understood. From then on, he dedicated his life and work to enlightening the public, encountering severe conflicts with conservative elements and the clergy that caused him endless suffering (Cowe 1992; Oshagan 2004).

<sup>9</sup> This grammar, and the following school grammar, *Grammar of the Mother Tongue* in 1874, remained the undisputed norm until Manuk Abeghian’s works in 1906-1912 (Dum-Tragut 2009).

<sup>10</sup> “Western Armenian and Eastern Armenian are about as different from each other as Spanish from Portuguese or Russian from Ukrainian. A proficient speaker of one version can easily pick up the other with some exposure to it in natural language settings, that is, in the speaking community” (Hagopian 2005: Introduction).

Eastern Armenian is the official language of the Republic of Armenia, as well as the unrecognized Republic of Mountainous Karabagh. It is also traditionally the language of Armenians living in the former Soviet Union, Iran, and India. Until the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Western Armenian<sup>11</sup> was the language of the greater Armenian Diaspora throughout the Middle East, Asia Minor, Europe, Australia, and the Americas. The current situation is much more complex due to changing settlement patterns. Sometimes it is difficult to draw clear distinctions between Eastern and Western Armenian communities, particularly in Los Angeles for example, where speakers of both standards have settled and are in constant contact. Moreover, a new generation of “hybrid” families increasingly uses both varieties of Armenian because the two parents speak varying standards and children are raised with *both* as their heritage language.

Orthography presents a major turning point in the development of the modern standards, particularly Eastern Armenian. Originally both standards used Classical Orthography, following the conventions of Classical Armenian<sup>12</sup>. However, in the early 1920s, Soviet Armenia, along with many other Soviet republics, implemented spelling reforms in order to simplify archaic spelling conventions and contribute to increasing literacy. The Soviet Orthography Reform of 1922 attempted to “rationalize the orthography by returning to the inventor’s principle of one letter – one sound” (Cowe 1992: 332) and thus abandon historical or etymological writing (Dum-Tragut 2009). Some of the extreme changes were modified in a second reform in 1940, but the gap between the official orthography of Soviet Armenian and the Armenian literary languages

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<sup>11</sup> Western Armenian is a language without a country or state support. It is currently declared as an endangered language by UNESCO (Kouloujian 2014).

<sup>12</sup> Over time there were minor revisions such as the addition of the letters *օ* and *ֆ* and the change of *մւ* into *ու*.

outside Armenia still remain (Dum-Tragut 2009). This series of revisions to traditional orthography created yet another point of division resulting in the current situation: Western Armenian and Iranian Armenians (who speak Eastern Armenian), still employ Classical Orthography, while the Republic of Armenia continues with the Reformed Orthography<sup>13</sup>.

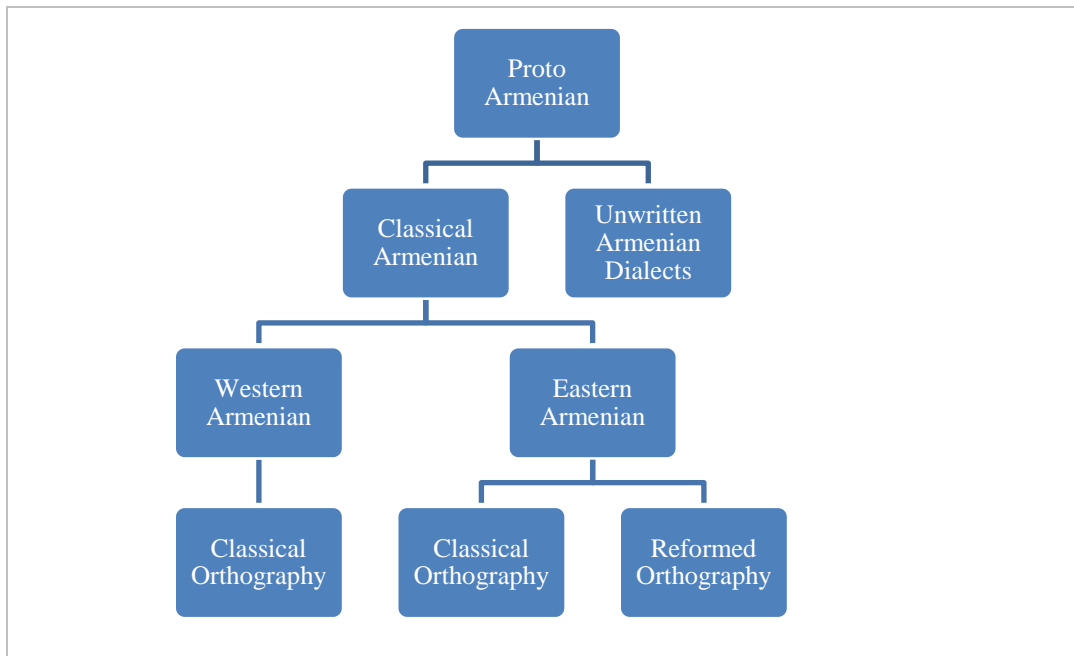


Figure 2.1: Evolution of Armenian language

Given the historic and sociocultural factors that have shaped the development of modern Armenian(s) presented above, it is important to highlight that both standards, Eastern and Western Armenian, have functioned in bi- or multilingual environments, a factor which has inevitably influenced the development of the two literary forms (Cowe 1992). As a language without a state, Western Armenian has been constantly employed alongside the dominant

<sup>13</sup> Although the issue of divergent orthographies has become quite politicized in some cases, the actual differences between the two spelling systems are not that large and can be encompassed in a set of a dozen rules. The main diversion concerns the spelling of the letters *կ*, *խ*, *օ*, *ն*, *ու*, *յ*, *ւ*, and diphthongs. “Compared to English spelling, suppose if all the silent [-e]-s at the end of a word were to be eliminated from writing and the same sound was always spelled with the same letter; try to imagine, say the words *kin*, *car*, *queen*, *choir*, *back*, etc. all spelled with *k* (or *c* or *q*)” (Hagopian 2005: 10).

language or languages of diasporic host countries, operating in a situation of continuous contact with languages such as Turkish, Arabic, French, and English. Eastern Armenian, although the main means of communication in Soviet Armenia, was heavily influenced by a rigorous Russification policy by central Moscow (Dum-Tragut 2009). As Dum-Tragut elaborates in the introduction to her Eastern Armenian grammar:

Despite the fact that Modern Eastern Armenian had assured its position as the national language of Soviet Armenia, in many crucial domains it was clearly endangered by Russian; particularly in the very sensitive domains of education, science, military and administration. Russian had become the second, almost obligatory, language in Armenia, and, until the end of the 80s, most ethnic Armenians were more or less bilingual. The educational system was in Russian, and a good command of Russian was the major precondition for higher education. Apart from that, speaking Russian was also regarded as having high social prestige and being up to date.

Russian has also strongly influenced many linguistic features of Armenian. Undoubtedly, it was particularly the lexicon that was influenced: a wide range of loans from Russian and several internationalisms transferred into Armenian through Russian and also many loan translations. There were many changes in morphology and syntax – triggered by internal linguistic factors, such as typological tendencies, but also external factors such as language contact and the pro-Russian language policy (2009: 5).

With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the declaration of independence of Armenia, a process of “De-Russification” and “Re-Armenisation” began to take place in a wide range of former Russian domains, such as public administration, education or military (Dum-Tragut 2009; Cowe 1992). Although Russian is not currently an obligatory language in the Republic of Armenia, it

still functions as a prominent second language, particularly for the older generations. Moreover, with the opening of the Republic of Armenia to Western Culture, the technical, political, and economic terminology has now been internationalized, or more accurately, Anglicized (Dum-Tragut 2009), with the influence and prominence of English growing exponentially.

A critical point of difference between the two standards centers on the degree of intralingual diglossia, defined as the complementary distribution of the literary and vernacular codes (Hudson 2002). Although some degree of register variation is present in most languages, diglossia is a more extreme version in which many speakers use their local dialect or variety at home or among family and friends but employ the standard language to communicate in public or formal occasions (Ferguson 1959). As characterized here, diglossia differs from the more widespread standard-with-dialects model in that no segment of the speech community in diglossia regularly uses the literary language as a medium of ordinary conversation, and any attempt to do so is felt to be either pedantic and artificial (Ferguson 1959). Moreover, children acquire the colloquial variant as their native language at home, and are later introduced to the literary standard through formal education (Ferguson 1959; Hudson 2002).

In general the linguistic distance between the Western literary and colloquial idiom is much closer when compared to the more diglossic situation of Eastern Armenian (Cowe 1992; Kouloujian 2014). In the case of Western Armenian, the vast demographic upheaval in the aftermath of the genocide displaced large numbers of agricultural communities from Anatolia (Cowe 1992). The next generation learned Western Armenian through formal education in various Middle Eastern cities; therefore, the language has not had the opportunity to develop a strong degree of intralingual diglossia.

The case of Eastern Armenian is quite distinct in the noticeable gap between the vernacular idiom(s)<sup>14</sup>, often labeled as the dialect of the plain of Ararat (Cowe 1992) or the dialect of Yerevan (Lessons in the Mother Tongue 2014) and the literary standard. The linguistic alternates are differentially allocated and in complimentary distribution based on social context, with the vernacular typically used in the home and everyday social interactions and the literary standard employed in formal and official contexts. Dum-Tragut highlights the “observable gap between the currently spoken Armenian vernacular and the written standard” (2009: 6). She notes that all textbooks and school grammars plainly overlook the recent linguistic developments and are conservatively prescriptive, not opening grammar to other description methods and approaches. “Conservatism is particularly observable in school teaching, where children have to keep their spoken language clean from vernacular Armenian – and must not use incorrect forms.’ Everything deviating even slightly from the prescriptive rules as given by grammars is regarded as incorrect and bad language” (Dum-Tragut 2009: 6).

This linguistic conservatism is quite striking in the face of major demographic changes in post-independence Armenia, such as mass emigration, immigration of refugees from Mountainous Karabagh and Azerbaijan, rural exodus, and repatriation of Diaspora Armenians. “The various Eastern (above all Iranian-Armenian) dialects have caused a process of “dialectalisation” and the contact with Western Armenian has also left interferences to a surprisingly high extent” (Dum-Tragut 2009: 6-7). Moreover, there has been a greater tendency to employ features of the vernacular in formal contexts (TV or newspaper interviews, speeches, etc.) previously restricted to the literary standard by state officials such as presidents and

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<sup>14</sup> These also include regional dialects, such as those spoken in Gyumri (a Western Armenian dialect), Karabagh, Gavar, etc.

parliament members. Television has been another venue where the vernacular has been more commonly employed, particularly in Armenian soap operas that heavily feature criminal story lines as well as TV shows in general. The situation of blurring the social contexts appropriate for the various linguistic variants and the greater prevalence of the vernacular in formal outlets is a current issue of intense debate in linguistic circles (Lessons in the Mother Tongue 2014). In sum, the more diglossic situation of Eastern Armenian must be considered as it relates to the case of heritage speakers in immigrant settings. As their profile predicts (see Introduction), typically heritage speakers lack formal education in Armenian; thus their main exposure and interaction with Armenian comes in the vernacular, as it is the only one appropriate for the home and everyday interactions.

Finally, the unique case of Iranian-Armenians, who employ various dialects of Eastern Armenian, must be highlighted as they represent a large portion of the Eastern Armenian speaking population in Los Angeles. Their situation is quite unique due to the historical factors that shaped their community's development. In the early 17<sup>th</sup> century Shah Abbas of the Persian Safavid dynasty forcibly relocated tens of thousands of Armenians from the areas of Ayrarat and the lower Araxes Valley<sup>15</sup> to an area of Isfahan called New Julfa, which served as an Armenian quarter (Kouymjian 2004). Additionally, Armenian refugees swelled the existing communities of Iran after the Armenian Genocide (1915-1923) (Dekmejian 2004). With the establishment of the Pahlavi dynasty by Reza Shah, the Armenians flourished in such urban centers as Tehran, Tabriz, Abadan, Isfahan, and Rasht, constituting Iran's largest non-Muslim community, numbering over 200,000 (Dekmejian 2004). "Being mostly apolitical, the Iranian Armenians

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<sup>15</sup> The mass migration included Armenians from Vayots Dzor, Sevan, Lori, Abaran, Shirakavan, Kars, Alashkert, Julfa, Nakhichevan, and the surrounding area (Kouymjian 2004).



were not greatly affected by the authoritarian nature of the regime; indeed given their entrepreneurial predilections, the Armenians fitted well into Iran's free-wheeling oil economy. In addition, they were given substantial autonomy in all aspects of communal life" (Dekmejian 2004: 422). The Iranian revolution of 1979 and the establishment of the Islamic Republic generated a wave of emigration that included many Armenians (Dekmejian 2004), which continues to the present. The remaining Armenians still represent the largest non-Muslim presence in Iran. Despite the periodic imposition of social and educational constraints by Islamic militants, Armenians have been spared the persecutions of Iran's Jewish and Bahai minorities (Dekmejian 2004).

Although this community developed into great prominence in Iran, it was largely detached from the linguistic developments of modern Eastern and Western Armenian mentioned above. Not only do Iranian-Armenians employ Classical Orthography, but the Iranian-Armenian dialects differ from vernacular Eastern Armenian(s) as spoken in Armenia. Variations mainly occur in certain areas of morphology, the modulations of the accent, and the presence of loan words and calques, all heavily influenced by Persian.

### **Armenian Immigration to the U.S.**

The existence of a long-standing and multifaceted Armenian Diaspora all over the world has been a defining factor in the tumultuous history of the Armenian people (Hovannisian 2004). It is estimated that there are eight to eleven million Armenians worldwide, out of which only three million<sup>16</sup> reside in the current Republic of Armenia located in Southern Caucasia. Not surprisingly, the second largest Armenian population in the world is located in the nearby

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<sup>16</sup> Due to mass emigration in the chaotic post-independence period, the population estimates of Armenia are presumably much lower than the official numbers put forth by the government.

Russian Federation, which is home to some two million Armenians<sup>17</sup>. The U.S. is the third largest base of the Armenian Diaspora with estimates ranging from 475,000-1.3 million people (Kossakian 2013).

Armenian immigration to America has a very long history with a few Armenians settling in the newly founded colony of Virginia at the beginning of the seventeenth century<sup>18</sup>. In 1653 two Armenians<sup>19</sup> were invited to reside in the U.S. because of their skills in sericulture, teaching natives their skills in the silkworm industry (Avakian 2008). However, the first wave of immigration did not begin until the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, when Armenians started to arrive to the U.S. in higher numbers. Encouraged by Protestant missionaries to seek higher education in New England universities, a group of young Armenian males made the long journey to the “Promise Land” at the this time<sup>20</sup> (Mirak 2004; Avakian 2008). However, the most powerful forces that stirred a large exodus were the execution of the Hamidian Massacres in the Ottoman Empire (1894-1896) and the Armenian Genocide (1915-1923) (Mirak 2004). Armenians fled to many parts of world, but for those who arrived in America, many settled on the East Coast, while others found solace in the farmlands of Fresno, CA that reminded them of

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<sup>17</sup> A great number of temporary “migrant workers” contribute to the large Armenian population in Russia because of its convenient location, higher employment opportunities, the absence of language barriers as most Armenians speak at least conversational Russian, and the relative ease of attaining permission to cross the Russian border (Yeghiazaryan, Avanesian, & Shahnazaryan 2003).

<sup>18</sup> “Records indicate that a John Martin (Martin the Armenian’), from Persia, arrived in 1618 ... where he became a tobacco dealer. It is assumed that he was the first Armenian on American soil.” (Avakian 2008: 99).

<sup>19</sup> They arrived from Izmir, a region of the Ottoman Empire where sericulture flourished. One of the men is referred to as George Hay, or “George the Armenian,” in the archives (Avakian 2008).

<sup>20</sup> “As early as 1831, through the Armenian Mission founded in the Bebek district of Constantinople, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, which had the objective of spreading the Bible throughout the world,’ established schools, colleges, and centers for the teaching of crafts to Armenian students. Designed to diffuse American ideals in a peaceful manner, these institutions instilled students with dreams of America where they could improve their prospects educationally, financially, and even spiritually” (Avakian 2008: 99-100).

their historic homeland. By 1924, there were over 100,000 Armenians in North America seeking a new life (Bakalian 1993). Particularly for the Armenians arriving in the early waves of immigration to Fresno, discriminatory acts were commonly enforced, such as restrictive covenants against landholding, discrimination in employment, and prohibitions against membership in lodges and clubs, including the YMCA and veterans' organizations. Armenian immigrants were called "Fresno Indians" and "lower class Jews" by Americans (Handlin et al. 1994: 143).

In 1948, a second wave of immigration began after World War II, with the arrival of a few thousand Armenians admitted under the Displaced Persons Act. After the immigration reforms of the 1960s that ended the discriminatory quota system in the U.S., larger numbers of Armenians began to seek refuge in America from the Middle East. Due to the political devastation caused by civil upheaval and war, the once prosperous and stable Armenian communities in Egypt, Turkey, Lebanon, and Iran were shaken, leading many Armenians to resettle in the U.S. (Mirak 2004). These waves of migrants settled first in the larger cities in the East, with some heading to Detroit and Chicago. Up until the 1960s, the largest Armenian American communities remained on the East Coast. The exception was a significant group who settled in the Central Valley of California in Fresno, where they engaged in agricultural work such as farming and grape growing. After 1975 and up to the late 1980s smaller groups of Armenians annually left Soviet Armenia for the U.S., many of whom had originally repatriated to Armenia after World War II from Europe, the Middle East, and the U.S. and had found it impossible to adjust to the socialist regime (Mirak 2004; Yeghiazaryan, Avanesian, & Shahnazaryan 2003). Soon other Soviet Armenians followed, benefiting from American refugee legislation and Soviet easing of immigration restrictions (Mirak 2004). Unlike former

immigrants, those arriving after the 1970s mostly preferred to settle in the West Coast, particularly Southern California.

The third and continuing wave of immigration spans the last few decades during which difficult living conditions in Armenia and diasporic hostland countries have continued to bring thousands more immigrating over to the U.S. The devastating 1989 Spitak earthquake, followed by the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict that erupted into a war between Karabagh and Azerbaijan, and the severe economic crisis after the collapse of the Soviet Union intensified emigration from Armenia (Yeghiazaryan, Avanesian, & Shahnazaryan 2003). According to some estimates some 475,000 people left Armenia in those difficult years as a result of the tremendous cuts in income for most of the population, the collapse of the energy supply, and the sharp deterioration in living conditions (Yeghiazaryan, Avanesian, & Shahnazaryan 2003). Over the past three decades, the majority of new Armenian immigrants to the U.S. have preferred the West Coast, particularly Los Angeles County. The following section will provide more in-depth information on the Armenians in the U.S., particularly as they are represented in the U.S. Census since 1980.

### **A Closer Look: Armenians in the U.S. Census**

The U.S. decennial census is an important tool that aids in tracking a targeted population in a systematic manner over time. However, as Claudia Der-Martirosian (2008) points out in her analysis of the Armenians in the 1980, 1990, and 2000 U.S. Census, the search for Armenians is a bit more challenging because they are categorized as *white* in the “Race” question. Only the long form of the questionnaire provided clues to the number of Armenians in the U.S., if the question “What is the person’s ancestry or ethnic origin?” was answered by respondents. The other measure was the “Place of Birth” question from which, in combination with the ancestry data, various Armenian subgroups could be identified. Der-Martirosian investigated the various

characteristics of the largest foreign-born subgroups represented in the census: Armenians from Armenia, Turkey, Lebanon, and Iran and then drew a comparison with native-born Armenian-Americans. In 1980 50,225 adult foreign-born and 93,890 adult U.S. born Armenians (age 18 and over) lived in the U.S., marking a total of 144,115. By 1990 the number of foreign-born had increased to 76,897 and the number of adult U.S. born Armenians to 127,953, adding up to a total of 204,850 adults of Armenian descent. In the 2000 U.S. Census the foreign-born population totaled 108,369, while the U.S. born population increased slightly to 139,610 persons. In the results from 2000, the largest number of foreign-born Armenians was from Armenia at 48,020; next came Iranian-Armenians at 31,854, followed by Lebanese-Armenians at 17,253, and finally, 11,242 Armenians from Turkey. As can be seen from these results, with the exception of the group from Turkey, all the other subgroups experienced significant population growth. By 2000, the immigrant population from Armenia and Iran quadrupled, while the group from Lebanon doubled. This considerable increase was due to a variety of key factors already mentioned above; many immigrants from the Middle East fled their respective host countries to escape civil turmoil, while those from Soviet Armenia first came for ideological and economic freedom and then as a result of severe economic hardships after the chaotic collapse of the Soviet Union. In addition to this, by 2000, the existence of an immigrant base, which was eager and able to apply for permanent residence for family members, most likely also contributed to higher numbers of new immigration. Consequently, the total number of adult individuals of Armenian descent in the U.S. increased 42% between 1980 and 1990, and 21% between 1990 and 2000. The change in three decades from 1980 to 2000 was a significant 72% (Der-Martirosian 2008). This information is concisely expressed in a table from Der-Martirosian (2008).

<b>Country of Birth</b>	<b>1980 Count</b>	<b>1990 Count</b>	<b>2000 Count</b>	<b>% change 1980-1990</b>	<b>% change 1990-2000</b>	<b>% change 1980-2000</b>
<b>Armenia</b>	14, 376	24, 972	48, 020	74%	92%	234%
<b>Iran</b>	9,734	21,687	31,854	123%	47%	227%
<b>Lebanon</b>	8,305	15,542	17,253	87%	11%	108%
<b>Turkey</b>	17,810	14,696	11,242	(17%)	(24%)	(37%)
<b>Total FB</b>	50,225	76,897	108,369	53%	41%	116%
<b>U.S. (NB)</b>	93,890	127,953	139,610	36%	9%	49%
<b>Total</b>	144,115	204,850	247,979	42%	21%	72%

NOTE: FB=Foreign born, NB=Native or U.S. Born, Data are for 18 years of age and older, Parenthesis ( ) means negative change

Figure 2.2: Population estimates for foreign-born and native-born Armenians in the United States (18 years of age and older) (Der- Martirosian 2008)

The most recent data from the U.S. Census generally confirm the trends presented by Der-Martirosian (2008) above. During the 2010 U.S. Census 474,559<sup>21</sup> Americans indicated either full or partial Armenian ancestry. Of the major subgroups presented above, the largest number of foreign-born Armenians came from Armenia at 72,800, followed by Iranian-Armenians at 43, 902, Lebanese-Armenians at 16,987, and finally 7,643 Armenians from Turkey (2006-2010 American Community Survey). The two subgroups that experienced the largest population growth between 2000 and 2010 were the Armenians from Armenia and Iran.

California has served as the destination of choice for all subgroups. In 1980 72% of Iranian-Armenians settled in California in contrast to only 28% of native-born Armenians. By 1990, Soviet-Armenians joined Iranian-Armenians, with the vast majority residing in California. The geographical concentration of Iranian-Armenians and former Soviet-Armenians in

<sup>21</sup> The total number of Armenians in the Census may be much lower than actual figures due to lack of participation. Some immigrants may have a fear of officialdom in addition to concerns about illegal immigration.

California intensified in 2000 with almost 90% centered in California, while for the native-born it stayed the same at 28% (Der-Martirosian 2008). The 2010 U.S. census results confirm that 54% of Armenian-Americans (241,323) reside in California, with Los Angeles County as the home of 179,279 Armenians (Kossakian 2013). The map below shows the concentrations of Armenians in the varying areas of Los Angeles County.

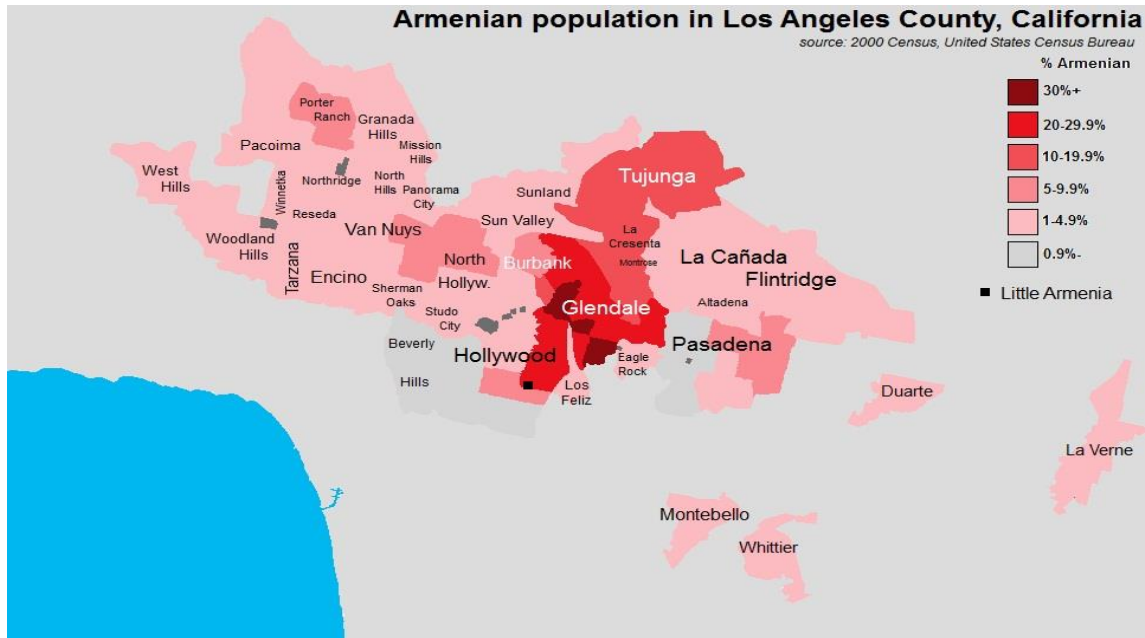


Figure 2.3: Concentrations of Armenian population in Los Angeles County (Kossakian 2013)

### Armenians in Los Angeles County

Armenian immigrants are attracted to Los Angeles County for a variety of reasons, including the appeal of a cosmopolitan urban area with greater employment opportunities and the presence of an older, multi-generational Armenian migrant community that settled a few decades earlier. More recent immigrants, especially from Armenia, tend to settle in Hollywood, while earlier Armenian migrants from Iran, Lebanon, and Armenia typically live in the city of Glendale. A part of the Los Feliz area of Hollywood was officially designated by the city as “Little Armenia” to reflect the large Armenian population and hundreds of Armenian businesses

within this area. In addition to Little Armenia, the urban neighborhood of Los Feliz with its highly diverse ethnic and economic community features Thai Town and a large active Latino Community. “North Los Feliz is connected to the famed Hollywood Hills, which is home to the rich and famous. However, if one keeps driving along Los Feliz Boulevard for several minutes, the street veers to the left and heads south towards an area which no longer consists of celebrity mansions but instead harbors all types of signs written in English, Spanish, and Armenian” (Karapetian Giorgi 2012: 175). Once one reaches Hollywood Boulevard, an official city sign, which reads “Little Armenia” hangs over the street sign designating "the area bounded on the north by Hollywood Blvd between the 101 Freeway and Vermont Ave, on the east by Vermont Avenue from Hollywood Blvd to Santa Monica Blvd, on the south by Santa Monica Blvd between Vermont Ave and the 101 Freeway and on the west by the 101 Freeway from Santa Monica Blvd to Hollywood Blvd" (Pierce 2007). The map below from Pierce (2007) highlights the boundaries of Little Armenia and the images that follow provide a sense of the cultural and linguistic presence of Armenian in Los Angeles County.

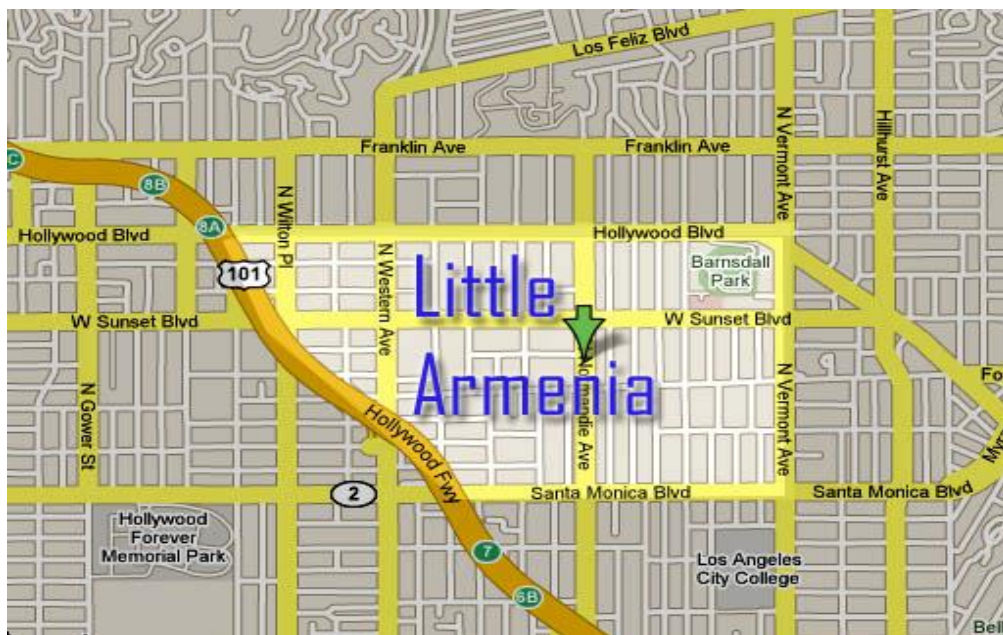


Figure 2.4: Map highlighting boundaries of Little Armenia in Hollywood, CA (Pierce 2007)





Figure 2.5: “Little Armenia” sign above Hollywood Boulevard; Figure 2.6: Armenian produce store with signs in English and Armenian



Figure 2.7: Falafel restaurant named after the Arax river with signage in English, Armenian, and Arabic; Figure 2.8: Sign for a driving/traffic school in Armenian, English, and Spanish

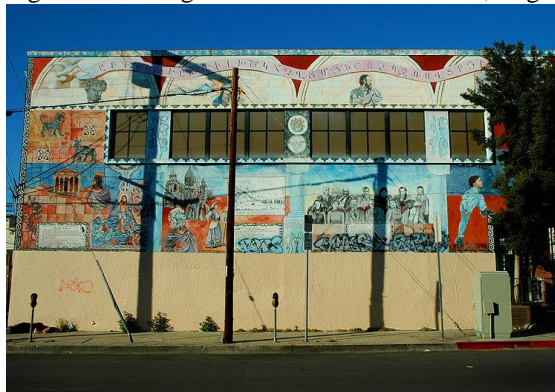


Figure 2.9: Mural of the history of Armenia depicted on a “Little Armenia” building with the Armenian alphabet presented in the banner at the top; Figure 2.10: Close-up of the mural



Figure 2.11: Road sign in Glendale in Spanish, English, and Armenian; Figure 2.12: Public Service announcement using the character of Walkin' Wille and his logo, “Wait, watch and walk” displayed on Public Works Division’s trash trucks and transportation Beeline buses in Glendale



Figure 2.13: Board for public services related to immigration in English, Armenian, and Farsi; Figure 2.14: Board for newly opened pharmacy with large signage in Armenian, including information about languages spoken on the bottom (English, Armenian, Russian)

In addition to the prominent community in “Little Armenia,” many Armenian immigrants anecdotally refer to the city of Glendale as “Bigger Armenia” since it is now home to the third-largest Armenian community in the world, following only Armenia itself and Moscow, Russia. It has developed relatively recently as Richard Dekmejian, director of Armenian Studies at the University of Southern California, explained in a *Los Angeles Times* interview: “When I first came to California to go to school in the 1950s, there were few Armenians in Glendale. Most of the Armenians were in West Adams, Boyle Heights, and in the Valley. There were a small

number of Armenians in Hollywood, but they grew very fast” (Covarrubias 2005). In her analysis of the Armenian community in Glendale based on statistics from the 2000 US Census, Mekdjian (2000) offers a very different picture of modern-day Glendale. Over half of the population (54.5%) of Glendale was foreign born, with those born in Iran, Armenia, and Lebanon representing 42.4% of the total foreign-born population and 21.5 % of the total population of Glendale. Over a quarter of the total population of Glendale (26.6%) declared “Armenian” as their first ancestry with Iranian-Armenians demographically dominating this category, followed by Armenians from Armenia and then Lebanese-Armenians. The most recent data from the 2010 U.S. Census lists 65,434 Armenians in the city of Glendale, comprising over 30% of the city’s population with Armenian students representing 40% of the student body in Glendale Unified School District (GUSD). Armenian is the most widely spoken language in the city, followed by English, Spanish, Tagalog, Korean, and a host of other languages (2008-2012 American Community Survey). Civic representation by Armenian-Americans in the city is also quite strong. Two of the five council members of the city of Glendale, including the current mayor are of Armenian descent, as well as four of the six members of the Board of Education in GUSD and two of the six members of the Board of Trustees of Glendale Community College. A quick drive down Glendale Avenue or any of the large streets in the city immediately reveals the overwhelming Armenian presence in this area amid the abundant Armenian businesses, churches, and cultural centers, all complete with prominent Armenian signage, often invoking names of Armenian cities, rivers, and mountains. Commenting on the high concentration of Armenians in Glendale, a coffee shop-owner, Arthur Melkonyan, who arrived in Glendale in 1991, exclaimed, “It shows, there are so many more Armenian stores around—in a lot of the

stores you can just speak Armenian and get by fine” (Grudin 2002), echoing the anecdotal notion in this community that one can live a good life in Glendale with only speaking Armenian.

Although there is a large concentration of Armenians in the Los Angeles area, it is misleading to assume that this is a homogeneous community. As Councilman Ara Najarian elaborated in a 2005 interview with the *Los Angeles Times*, “Armenian Americans don’t all think the same way or walk in lock step. We’re very diverse, from the poorest in the city to the richest; some are professionals and some are newly arrived with their own language and customs. It’s not like we had 60,000 people who came from Armenia yesterday and settled in Glendale” (Covarrubias 2005). Armenians from Armenia who are primarily from the third immigration wave, though often highly educated<sup>22</sup>, tend to be refugee, working-class immigrants struggling to create a new life for themselves. In contrast, Armenians from Iran and Lebanon, mainly settled in Glendale, are largely comprised of second-wave immigrants, many of whom achieved great material wealth in their countries of origin and are therefore more economically secure in the U.S. Furthermore, they have a two-decade lead and financial advantage over the newer immigrants from Armenia (Karapetian Giorgi 2012). In 1990, when Der-Martirosian et al. conducted a study on occupation and class within the Armenian sub-groups of Los Angeles, they found that Iranian Armenians composed 30 percent of white-collar executive and upper management positions, while post-Soviet Armenians composed two-thirds of the Armenians who performed blue-collar, low-wage positions. Despite their differences, both groups have established culturally rich Armenian communities in Los Angeles by building churches, schools, societies, and youth organizations as well as publishing newspapers and magazines (Pattie 2005).

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<sup>22</sup> An overwhelming majority of the Armenian immigrants from (Soviet) Armenia have tertiary education, as this was the widespread norm in the homeland.

## **Presence of Armenian: Signs of Maintenance**

### *Social Services*

In addition to being able to speak Armenian in the numerous local Armenian businesses in the Los Angeles area, a host of social services and public documents can also be accessed in the Armenian language. Upon calling Los Angeles County's 24-hour information line (211) and choosing "other languages" after the English and Spanish announcements, the caller is directed to the Armenian option, promptly leading to an Armenian interpreter on the other line. The main duty of the interpreter is to direct people to organizations such as the Armenian Relief Society of Western U.S. that can provide social services (job search, welfare assistance, etc.) in Armenian. The California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) provides its Class C written and audio driver license exam in Armenian among many other languages. The Unified School Districts of the cities of Los Angeles (LAUSD), Glendale (GUSD), and Burbank (BUSD) all provide forms, policies, and information in Armenian, including documents related to student enrollment, registration, inter-district and intra-district permits, emergency information, and parent/student handbooks. Glendale Public Library processes its applications and all additional forms in Armenian as well. In the realm of healthcare and legal services, many hospitals and courts provide documents (medical or insurance rights forms, legal rights documents) and information in Armenian. In sum, most paperwork and social services can be received and completed in Armenian in Los Angeles County. In cases of unavailable documents and services, formal Armenian translation services are often readily available, not to mention the ease of finding an Armenian-speaking employee ready to help with basic interpretation and guidance.

## *Media*

A quick visit to Abril bookstore in Glendale or any Armenian local market in the Los Angeles area and near the entrance one will be greeted with newspaper stands filled with dozens of Armenian dailies, weeklies, and magazines. Many of the newspapers have their headquarters in Southern California and are the official publications of various Armenian political parties<sup>23</sup>, while others are published in Armenia with wide distribution abroad. The history of *Asbarez* daily newspaper, for example, provides a good insight into the development of the Armenian community in Southern California. *Asbarez* began publication in Fresno as a weekly in 1908. After several successful decades, its headquarters moved to Los Angeles in the 1970s following the trends of Armenian immigration. Currently it is a bilingual daily (English/Armenian), both in print and on-line, serving the Armenian-American community in the Western States. As Arno Yeretjian, owner of Abril bookstore explained, customers eagerly wait in line in the mornings to pick up their copies of popular newspapers such as *Asbarez*, *Zhamanak*, *Nor Hayastan*, *Nor Or*, *Nor Gyank*, and many others (personal communication, May 1, 2014). According to Yeretjian, the overwhelming majority of newspaper consumers are elderly Armenians from Armenia and Iran (personal communications, May 1, 2014), echoing Kouloujian's (2014) assertion that newspapers function as linguistic islands in the Diaspora, serving only one segment of the population (i.e. first generation immigrants with high literacy). In addition to providing news on current events both in the homeland and the larger Diaspora, newspapers and magazines provide entertainment (Armenian crosswords, horoscopes, etc.) as well as useful classifieds, such as job postings and apartment rental notices.

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<sup>23</sup> For example: *Asbarez* – Armenian Revolutionary Federation Western U.S. Central Committee; *Massis* weekly – Social Democratic Hunchakian Party of the Western Region of the U.S.; *Nor Or* – Democratic Liberatl (Ramkavar) Party.

Along with the availability of print media, the Los Angeles community features seven 24-hour Armenian television networks with proprietary programming. Some of the popular local networks include Shant ARTN (Armenian-Russian Television Network), USArmenia TV, and Horizon, all of which broadcast programs from Armenia in addition to local programming and advertising. Programming is free to air and available with basic cable providers such as Charter, Time Warner, Adelphia, AT&T, Verizon, Dish Network, and Direct TV. Moreover, since 2000 Armenia's Public Television Station (more commonly known as Armenia1 or H1) has been available to this community via satellite and private subscription, enjoying wide popularity. This network entirely broadcasts the programming from Armenia supplementing it with local advertising. The wide array of programming on all of the networks includes news coverage of national and international events, kids' programming, cultural shows, religious programming, as well as a variety of entertainment shows. The line-up for entertainment involves a broad selection of programs, many modeled on Western originals, such as sitcoms (Two and a Half Men), competition shows (American Idol, Dancing with the Stars/So You Think You Can Dance, Got Talent), reality shows, quiz shows (Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?), cooking shows, talk shows, and a number of extremely popular soap operas, mainly produced in Armenia. All of the networks now have 24-hour on-line screening, eliminating any geographic or subscription based obstacles and increasing wide access to their programming. When asked to describe the general viewership of Armenian programming in the Los Angeles area, Harry Aslanian, the long-time operational director for H1 in the continental U.S., described a segment of the population that is typically age 40 and older, mostly comprised of first-generation immigrants from Armenia and to a lesser degree Iran and Lebanon, and Armenian dominant (personal communication, May 2, 2014). "Young people don't watch Armenian TV because

English language TV is much more appealing. As for the older cohort, often due to a language barrier, they can't access English language television and thus turn to the accessible and often more familiar Armenian programming" (H. Aslanian, personal communication, May 2, 2014).

*Cultural Events*

The Los Angeles community also boasts an active cultural scene filled with Armenian concerts, plays, artistic performances, comedy shows, movie and documentary screenings, and lectures on a variety of Armenian related topics. Many feature visiting performers, artists, scholars, and productions from Armenia as well as the worldwide Diaspora, while others are locally organized; all of which are conveniently advertised and promoted through Armenian newspapers and television. The large neon marquee of the famous Alex Theatre in Glendale constantly features the dates and titles of a multitude of Armenian events in flashing lights. The creation of a website ten years ago, aptly entitled armeniancalendar.com, also reflects the abundance and variety of Armenian events. Although the website's goal as identified in their "About Us" section is to "feature Armenian event information to Armenians of all ages in all corners of the world," a passing glance at their daily home page indicates that most events are concentrated in the Los Angeles area.

Date	Event Title	City	Category
Sunday, May 4	A Screening of the Orphanes of Genocide	Encino	Film
Sunday, May 4	Mother Agnes-Mariam of the Cross/What is Really Happening in Syria Today	Glendale	Lecture
Sunday, May 4	Gagik Badalyan live in concert "MY WAY"	Glendale	Concert
Sunday, May 4	Sose & Allen's Legacy Benefit Concert	Glendale	Concert
Sunday, May 4	PBS SoCal Plus to premiere "Tumo: CHANGE STARTS WITHIN ARMENIA"	Los Angeles	Documentary
Sunday, May 4	"Armenian & Assyrian Cooperation & Cohabitation in Iran's Urmia Region" - an illustrated talk by Dr. Nicholas Al-Jeloo	Mission Hills	Presentation
Sunday, May 4	AGBU Krikor Satamian Theatre Group's newest Armenian Comedy play "SHOGHOKORT" (The Flatterer)	Pasadena	Theatre
Sunday, May 4	Premiere screening of "Apricot, Blessed tree of Armenia" documentary film	Pasadena	Film Premiere
Sunday, May 4	Armenia Tree Project 20th Celebration	San Marino	Anniversary
Sunday, May 4	Mother Agnes-Mariam of the Cross/What is Really Happening in Syria Today	Van Nuys	Lecture

Figure 2.15: Page of Armenian events from Armeniancalendar.com



### *Public Education*

The growing presence of the Armenian community over the last few decades in Los Angeles County is fittingly represented in the increasing number of Armenian language programs in the public education sector, including after school programs, immersion programs, charter schools, and foreign language class options. The Davidian and Mariamian Educational Foundation is one of the earliest programs to be established (1987), serving as a non-profit organization that provides after-school programs in Armenian language, culture, and heritage to elementary schools in Los Angeles County<sup>24</sup>. The program meets twice a week for four hours total and currently serves numerous elementary schools in the cities of Glendale (12), Burbank (4), La Crescenta (3), La Canada (1), Tujunga (1), North Hollywood (1), and Granada Hills (1)<sup>25</sup>. As children progress in each grade in their elementary school, they advance in the afterschool Armenian language program, where they are first taught the basics in reading and writing and then engaged in more complex instruction. As articulated in the program's mission statement, activities that enrich the program include "performances of Armenian patriotic poems, songs, and plays in the classroom, during assemblies and public celebrations of Armenian holidays." Additionally, "projects, posters, pictures, objects and maps help students learn and appreciate the culture, tradition and values of their ancestors. Armenian history and religion are essential components of the elementary Armenian program, giving students a sense of the Armenian identity as well as the importance of values and moral development."

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<sup>24</sup> Several of the participants in this study attended some portion of this program in different elementary schools across Los Angeles County.

<sup>25</sup> The annual tuition for this program is around \$500.

In the last decade GUSD, particularly at the elementary level, has stood out as a model district for bilingualism and biliteracy. In 2003, with the assistance of Title VII grant funds, the district began its first Spanish dual language program with 18 students. As a result of increased interest, popularity, and funding the program expanded into multiple classes in several elementary schools across Glendale. Currently GUSD has over 700 students enrolled in Spanish dual immersion programs in grades K-10. Gaining momentum and popularity, between 2007-2010, the program not only added additional sites, but also additional program models and languages, including Spanish, Italian, French, German, Armenian, Japanese, and Korean.

Currently the district's Foreign Language Academies of Glendale (FLAG) program offers seven (Italian, French, German, Spanish, Armenian, Japanese, and Korean) dual immersion programs with more than 2,000 students enrolled district wide. Dual-immersion programs in Italian, French, German, and Spanish (all of which use Latin-based alphabets) follow the 90/10 model in which students receive initial instruction in the non-English target language for 90% of the day starting in kindergarten and 10% in English. The percentage of English instruction increases annually until 50% of the day is taught in English and 50% in the target language by fifth and sixth grade. Initial content and literacy instruction takes place in the non-English language. As students progress to upper elementary school, content is divided between English and the target language. The 50/50 program model is used in GUSD's dual immersion programs for Armenian, Japanese, and Korean, all of which have non-Latin based alphabets. Students in the 50/50 programs receive English instruction for 50% of the day and target language instruction for the remaining 50% throughout elementary school. Literacy and content area subjects are taught in both languages and divided by time and/or content.

In 2006, in response to strong community interest, the Armenian program at GUSD initially started as the Heritage Language program at Jefferson Elementary in Glendale. The goal of this program was to maintain students' heritage language, culture, and tradition with daily instruction during which Armenian language was taught as enrichment, with literacy as a primary focus<sup>26</sup>. In 2009, Jefferson Elementary School started the 50/50 Armenian dual immersion program and in the fall of 2010, the FLAG Armenian Program expanded to include R.D. White Elementary School. The main objective of this program is to develop bilingualism and biliteracy with academic language in two languages; therefore, Armenian language is taught both for language acquisition and content instruction. Dual Immersion classes are taught by fully credentialed bilingual teachers who have additional preparation and expertise in teaching Armenian. Eastern Armenian (Reformed orthography) is the primary standard of instruction; however, students are exposed to the Classical orthography and the Western standard as encountered in literature and other supplemental materials.

An additional development in terms of Armenian language instruction in Los Angeles County was the opening of Ararat Charter School in 2010, which currently enrolls 351 students in grades K-5 on two campuses in the city of Van Nuys. The mission of the school as stated on their website is “to educate students to their maximum potential in an environment that actively engages students in rigorous and relevant programs, promotes academic excellence, and values cultural and linguistic diversity.” Though not an immersion model as defined above in the case of GUSD’s FLAG programs, Ararat Charter School is the first school to incorporate two languages other than English into their core curriculum: Armenian and Spanish.

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<sup>26</sup> This model will be phased out as current students move up grades and promote to middle school.

In terms of Armenian language programs or options beyond elementary school, Glendale school officials are currently reviewing a plan to advance GUSD's popular immersion courses up to the 12<sup>th</sup> grade (Corrigan 2014). According to the proposal, various middle schools and high schools would offer classes in the different languages of GUSD's FLAG program, where students would continue studying their chosen language with an intensive class every day. The school board president, Nayiri Nahabedian, and community members are very supportive of this plan (Corrigan 2014). At this point, only Toll Middle School in Glendale offers an (Eastern) Armenian heritage course for more advanced learners, which only started this year (A. Asatryan, personal communication, May 1, 2014). At the high school level, between 2004-2007/2008, Crescenta Valley High School in Glendale offered Armenian language courses for heritage speakers by housing one of the language courses of Glendale Community College on their campus. The student body was thus comprised of a mix of high school and college students, who took part in a college level Armenian course designed for heritage learners. Over the last decade, both Glendale High School and Hoover High School in GUSD have also offered (Eastern) Armenian as a foreign language option, including four different levels with increasing difficulty (Armenian 1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8). Classes are typically entirely comprised of 1.5 or second generation heritage learners, with a few non-native speakers as well (A. Asatryan, personal communication, May 1, 2014).

In addition to the host of K-12 Armenian language programs presented above, the Greater Los Angeles area truly stands out as the heart of Armenian Studies in the realm of higher education. At the community college level, Glendale Community College emerges as the leader, with over a dozen Armenian Studies courses offered including multiple levels of Armenian language (Eastern Armenian) for both foreign and heritage learners, three courses on Armenian

literature spanning various time periods, and courses on Armenian history. Nearby Pasadena Community College offers two semesters of Elementary (Western) Armenian as well.

At the university level, California State University, Northridge (CSUN) boasts the largest population of Armenian college students outside of Yerevan State University with 10% of its student body comprised of Armenians students. Armenian Studies started out at CSUN as one class in the Department of Modern and Classical Languages in 1983. Since then, it has grown into one of the largest programs of its kind in the country, offering 14 different courses in a range of subjects--from Armenian languages to culture and contemporary issues--as well as a minor in Armenian studies and a concentration for students majoring in liberal studies (Chandler 2006).

In 2005, the University of Southern California (USC) founded the Institute of Armenian Studies as a multidisciplinary program with a broad mission to increase understanding of modern Armenia. USC offers courses on Armenian history as well as a course entitled “Colloquium in Armenian Studies: Social and Cultural Issues,” which features lectures on political, social, and cultural issues related to the Armenian Republic and Diaspora community by an instructor as well as visiting lecturers with expertise in specific areas. Since its inception the institute has sponsored numerous events, including multidisciplinary talks and conferences, with very high attendance.

The University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) possesses the longest and richest history in Armenian Studies, with two endowed chairs: the Narekatsi Chair in Armenian Language and Literature founded in 1969 in the department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures (NELC) and the Richard Hovannisian Chair (formerly known as the Armenian Educational Foundation Chair) in Modern Armenian History established in 1987 in the department of History. Since 1997 regular instruction in both Eastern and Western Armenian has

been established with a popular undergraduate minor in Armenian Studies introduced the following year. Undergraduate students also have the option of completing a Middle Eastern Studies Major with an Armenian focus through NELC. At the graduate level, students can pursue M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in Armenian Studies through NELC, History, and Archaeology. The number and range of Armenian Studies courses offered at UCLA is quite impressive (26 in regular years) with classes in all three major standards of the Armenian language (Classical, Eastern, and Western) at several levels, various periods of Armenian history and literature, including graduate seminars, as well as Armenian film and drama. In recent years, these have been supplemented with novel and interdisciplinary courses in Armenian Studies by visiting scholars in fields such as Armenian architecture, anthropology, art-history, and women's studies. This year two new fields have been added: Armenian Archaeology and Ethnography and Armenian music.

### *Private Education*

In addition to educational options in Armenian in the public sector, this community is home to numerous Armenian schools with varying grade levels in the private domain. At present there are over a dozen private Armenian day schools (over 20 if preschools are included) in Southern California, the majority of which are in the Greater Los Angeles area (see table below). More than half of these schools are grouped under the auspices of the Western Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America, governed by the Board of Regents, which is appointed by the Prelate and Executive Council. The remaining schools are typically independent (of one another and the Prelacy), many with their own religious or political affiliation, although they do come together on certain occasions, such as an annual staff development day hosted by the Board of Regents of Prelacy Schools. As can be seen from the table below, many of the schools offer

all grades (K-12), with some going up to 8<sup>th</sup> grade, and a few that terminate at the elementary level. Almost all of the Prelacy schools have related pre-schools in nearby locations that aid in the smooth transition of children from Armenian pre-schools to Armenian day schools.

<b>Prelacy Schools</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>Year Established</b>	<b>Highest Grade Level</b>
Holy Martyrs Ferrahian Armenian School	Encino	1964	12th
Holy Martyrs ARS Ashkhen Pilavjian Armenian Preschool	Encino	1991	Pre-K
Armenian Mesrobian School	Pico Rivera	1965	12th
Ron & Goharik Gabriel Armenian Preschool	Pico Rivera	1970	Pre-K
Rose & Alex Pilibos Armenian School	Los Angeles	1969	12th
Mary Postoian Armenian Preschool	Los Angeles	1970	Pre-K
Krouzian Zekarian Vasbouragan Armenian School	San Francisco	1980	8th
Krouzian Zekarian Vasbouragan Armenian Preschool	San Francisco	1980	Pre-K
Ari Guiragos Minassian Armenian School	Santa Ana	1986	6th
Ari Guiragos Minassian Armenian Preschool	Santa Ana	1986	Pre-K
Vahan & Anouch Chamlian Armenian School	Glendale	1975	8th
Richard Tufenkian Armenian Preschool	Glendale	1975	Pre-K
Levon & Hasmig Tavlian Armenian Preschool	Pasadena	1992	Pre-K

Figure 2.16: Prelacy Armenian schools in Southern California

<b>Non-Prelacy Schools</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>Year Established</b>	<b>Highest Grade Level</b>
AGBU Marie Manoogian School	Canoga Park	1976	12th

AGBU Vatche and Tamar Manoukian School	Pasadena	2006	9-12th
Merdinian Armenian Evangelical School	Sherman Oaks	1982	8th
T.C.A. Arshag Dikranian Armenian School	Los Angeles	1981	12th
St. Gregory Alfred & Marguerite Hovsepian School	Pasadena	1984	8th
Armenian Community School of Fresno	Fresno	1976	6th
Mekhitarist Fathers Armenian School	La Crescenta	1979	8th
Armenian Sisters Academy	Montrose	1985	8th
Sahag-Mesrob Armenian Christian School	Pasadena	1980	8th

Figure 2.17: Non-prelacy Armenian schools in Los Angeles County

Armenian day schools function like regular private schools that in addition to a basic curriculum of general studies teach Armenian language, history, literature, religion, and culture. It is crucial to highlight that these are not bilingual programs like in the case of the GUSD programs discussed above, as students are taught all core subjects in English except for Armenian classes. There is no content instruction in Armenian outside of Armenian subject classes and the hours of Armenian instruction are quite limited. Traditionally the language of instruction for Armenian subjects has been Western Armenian, with a few schools such as Chamlian, Arshag Dickranian<sup>27</sup>, and Pilibos offering Eastern Armenian as well to accommodate to the new demographics of the community. According to the most recent data from the Board of Regents, the total enrollment of all the day schools in Southern California, including preschools, is slightly over 5,000 students.

<sup>27</sup> Arshag Dickranian has recently started teaching Eastern Armenian using Reformed Orthography due to the increasing presence of students whose families emigrated from Armenia.



In addition to the schools listed above, there are a host of Armenian pre-schools and daycare centers all over Los Angeles County. As can be seen from the low enrollment number presented above, many families cannot afford<sup>28</sup> or do not choose to send their children to Armenian day schools; however, many do turn to Armenian pre-schools as a form of daycare or as a means to efficiently transition their children into the educational world. Many of these preschools are housed in appealing facilities with colorful signs in both Armenian and English, focusing on early childhood education services that enhance children's learning and social development through arts and crafts, dance, language acquisition, science, and basic arithmetic. The language of instruction is dominantly Armenian; however, often at the parents' request, English has increasingly been introduced in order to prepare children for Kindergarten. Due to large demand, there are also a great number of daycares and preschools run in private homes with state licensing. The dominant language of instruction for a majority of the newer daycares and preschools is Eastern Armenian, accommodating the influx of recent immigrants from Armenia.

Part-time or supplemental Armenian schooling is also offered in these communities through the means of Saturday schools. Generally these classes meet for two or more hours on Saturday mornings and afternoons where children of Armenian descent learn the rudiments of the Armenian alphabet, history, and culture. A prominent example is Narek Cultural Foundation in Glendale established in 1989. It consists of a pre-school for 2-5 year olds as well as a very popular Saturday school for grades K-8, with 400 students currently enrolled. Instruction is carried out in Eastern Armenian (Reformed orthography), with textbooks and materials, mainly acquired from the Republic of Armenia.

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<sup>28</sup> Tuition for private Armenian day schools generally ranges from \$600-\$800 per month.

## **Signs of Loss**

Although the picture above presents a very vibrant and robust linguistic community, it is heavily sustained by the continuing immigration from Armenia and to a lesser degree, other Diaspora communities. A strong degree of decline in the use of Armenian among U.S. born second and third generation Armenian-Americans can be gleaned from census results as well as the creation of multiple task forces in the last few years to address issues of failing Armenian instruction in Armenian day schools and methods of promoting Armenian language use community wide.

### *Language Spoken at Home*

Until the 2000 U.S. census, there was another very important section in the Census questionnaire that asked respondents about the language they speak at home and their knowledge of English. Der-Martirosian (2008), in her study of Armenians in the 1980, 1990, and 2000 U.S. census, analyzed the responses to the language spoken at home questions. As can be seen from the charts below, particularly for Armenians from Armenia, Iran, and Lebanon, the language of choice at home across the three decades was Armenian. A major contributing factor to this was undoubtedly the ongoing immigration, especially from Armenia and Iran. In 2000, 91% of immigrants from Armenia and Iran, 90% of immigrants from Lebanon, and 70% from Turkey reported speaking Armenian at home. However, the great majority of U.S. born Armenians reported speaking English at home with the use of Armenian decreasing over time (25% in 1980, 18% in 1990, 16% in 2000). Language use data of Armenians in the U.S. census is presented in the tables below from information in Der-Martirosian's study (2008).

1980 Census	Country of Birth				
	Armenia	Iran	Lebanon	Turkey	U.S.
Language Spoken at Home:					
<b>Armenian</b>	65%	86%	88%	79%	25%
<b>English</b>	28%	5%	3%	9%	73%
Speaks English:					
<b>Not well/not at all</b>	30%	21%	21%	33%	NA

1990 Census	Country of Birth				
	Armenia	Iran	Lebanon	Turkey	U.S.
Language Spoken at Home:					
<b>Armenian</b>	88%	90%	90%	79%	18%
<b>English</b>	5%	4%	4%	8%	80%
Speaks English:					
<b>Not well/not at all</b>	39%	34%	16%	39%	NA

2000 Census	Country of Birth				
	Armenia	Iran	Lebanon	Turkey	U.S.
Language Spoken at Home:					
<b>Armenian</b>	91%	91%	90%	70%	16%
<b>English</b>	3%	4%	6%	9%	81%
Speaks English:					
<b>Not well/not at all</b>	29%	31%	16%	36%	NA

Figure 2.18: Language use responses by Armenians from Armenia, Iran, Lebanon, Turkey and U.S. born in the 1980, 1990, and 2000 U.S. Census (Der-Martirosian 2008)

This is the typical process for children of immigrants who tend to lose their heritage language quite quickly, with most immigrant groups shifting entirely to English typically within three generations (Valdés 2001; Fishman 1991). In 2006, one study found that the “life expectancy” of

five languages in Southern California (Spanish, Tagalog, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Korean) was no more than two generations, the results of which led the authors to label the U.S. as a “linguistic graveyard” (Rumbaut, Massey, and Bean 2006).

### *Task Forces*

Currently there are three Task Forces with increasing degrees of outreach actively working on issues related to enhancing Armenian language instruction in Armenian schools as well as revitalizing and promoting oral and written Armenian in the Los Angeles community at wide. The first of these, entitled the Saroyan Project, was launched in July of 2011 by the administration of Chamlian Armenian School, following the concerns raised by Chamlian alumni invited to participate in a one-day symposium in order to examine the condition of Armenian language instruction. The principal initiated the candid dialogue with concerned alumni and community members with the following simple diagnosis on his behalf: “We have a two-pronged problem at our school. First, our students don’t like Armenian class. Second, they don’t graduate with proficiency in Armenian” (V. Madenlian, personal communication, June 11, 2011). Thus the Saroyan committee was created, bringing together school administrators, teachers, and UCLA researchers to address the issues highlighted during the symposium<sup>29</sup>.

The first phase of the project consisted of assessing the environment beginning at the first grade level, including collection and analysis of the demographics of the incoming class, several meetings and focus groups with Eastern and Western Armenian first grade teachers, class observations, and studying the current curriculum and textbooks. Based on the evaluation of the assessments above, the next stage centered on developing new and more fitting Armenian language standards as the existing ones were merely a translation of English Language Arts

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<sup>29</sup> I currently serve as one of the members of the Saroyan committee.

standards and naturally not functional for this group of heritage learners. Moreover, the committee implemented a series of workshops designed to train the teachers in the fundamentals of heritage language instruction, objective-based teaching, lesson planning, classroom management, and best pedagogical practices. Furthermore, in tandem with the teachers, the committee has launched a new series of objective-based and uniform unit plans for the first grade. These comprise the curriculum as currently implemented in the school, with an observation-based checks and balances system of providing consistent aid and feedback to teachers. The long-term goals of the project are to continue the instructional reforms for all of the additional grades (up to 8<sup>th</sup> grade).

The second Task Force was initiated in January of 2013 by the Executive Director of the Board of Regents of Prelacy Armenian Schools in order to enhance and promote Armenian education within Prelacy schools. Committee members include Armenian language professors at UCLA and CSUN, Armenian Studies scholars, and current and former principals of Armenian schools<sup>30</sup>. A process of data collection and assessment of the current situation of Armenian instruction began with a focus group meeting with 40-50 Armenian subject teachers from all of the Prelacy schools on February 9, 2013. The concerns highlighted at the teachers' meeting along with the evaluation of factors such as declining enrollment trends from the last decade, the assessments of former task forces and committees, and the input of the current Task Force members from their own varying areas of expertise led to the decision to create a progress report or plan of action. On February 4, 2014 the Task Force presented its diagnosis, work plan, vision, mission, core values, and short and long term strategies and action plans to the Board of Regents.

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<sup>30</sup> I also serve as a committee member of the Board of Regents' Task Force.

Without going into great detail, some of the diagnostic elements and recommendations will be briefly summarized. Armenian schools face a number of serious challenges, many of them articulated in the progress report, echoing Peroomian's<sup>31</sup> (2006) outlook on the declining condition of Armenian schools. There is consensus that Armenian instruction is failing, with Armenian "growing like a fruit in a greenhouse" (Peroomian 2006: 1), limited to the boundaries of the Armenian language classroom, and viewed as a forced/imposed subject by the students. It is not the dominant, everyday language of Armenian youth, as English governs interactions among peers. Giving in to the reality that Armenian language use is declining, Prelacy schools and second and third generation community leaders have re-evaluated the boundaries of Armenianness, de-emphasizing the role of language in that formula and instead highlighting less tangible notions such as possessing an Armenian spirit or dedication to the Armenian cause. Moreover, the schools have not caught up to the realities of the changing demographic profile of the community and their student body over the past few decades. Despite the fact that Eastern Armenian is the language of the overwhelming majority of recent immigrants, the dominant language of instruction in Armenian Prelacy schools is still Western Armenian (exceptions noted above). As a result, for the Eastern Armenian speaking student the language of the home is different from the language at school, not to mention the differences in orthography for those from Armenia, as well as the complications brought about by the diglossic nature of Eastern Armenian. Teachers, who may not be fully educated in fields of linguistics, sociolinguistics, pedagogy, and Armenian Studies "perform ruins on Eastern Armenian students, repelling them from the language" (Peroomian 2006: 2). The issue of Armenian teachers is an extremely grave

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<sup>31</sup> Dr. Rubina Peroomian is an Armenian Studies scholar as well as an active member of the community involved in multiple Task Forces and Committees. She has worked closely with the Armenian schools over the past few decades and serves on the last two of the Task Forces presented in this chapter.

one, as the present cohort is almost entirely from Middle Eastern communities, often with limited or no professional education or expertise in teaching Armenian (or teaching in general), particularly in the American setting. Furthermore, many of the currently employed teachers are on the brink of retirement without viable candidates to take over, as there is no institution in the U.S. that produces Armenian teachers, nor is the job viewed as economically or socially prestigious by the community. Finally, as explained above, there is growing competition from the public school sector, which seems to be more in tune with the current demographics and pedagogical trends in the fields of bilingualism and biliteracy.

In its presentation to the Board of Regents, the Task Force proposed modifying both their mission and vision to restore and highlight the role of Armenian and the need to create consumers and producers of Armenian culture via a “living and current language.” Core values recommended for adoption center around various major points: not discriminating against the demographic or linguistic composition of students (i.e. Eastern Armenian, Western Armenian, Armenian from Armenia, Iranian Armenian, etc.); appreciation and pride in the language as beautiful and viable in all its forms: spoken, written, dialect, standard; recognition of the role of language as the most essential factor in culture and its main vehicle of transmission; need for the language to be viewed as a dynamic, organic instrument capable of incorporating all aspects of life in opposition to the ingrained notion of Armenian only for Armenian topics, events, people, etc.; the need to improve not only Armenian instruction, but instruction in all subjects in order to elevate the quality and prestige of Armenian schools and thus attract more students.

Short-term strategic goals propose actions such as organizing periodic lectures for parents in order to educate them about bilingualism, dispelling common myths and highlighting the cognitive and social benefits, and providing computer literacy in Armenian for teachers and

administrators. Long-term goals include the creation of an endowed professorship at CSUN with the purpose of preparing Armenian teachers by providing interested candidates with the opportunity to receive teaching credentials while pursuing a degree in Armenian Studies. Another long-term project includes the introduction of an entirely new organizational culture focused on increasing the presence and use of Armenian in schools. The members of the Board of Regents have reacted positively to the presentation by the Task Force and are currently in the process of an in-depth review and evaluation of the above-mentioned recommendations, among many others.

On May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013 the “Armenian Language Preservation Committee” was launched at the invitation of Prelate H.E. Archbishop Moushegh Mardirossian and the Executive Council of the Western Prelacy, with a focus on the revitalization and preservation of the oral and written Armenian language in the Los Angeles community. Similar to the other Task Forces, this committee is comprised of language professors, Armenian school principals, Armenian Studies scholars, and prominent community members<sup>32</sup>. As articulated in the press release of the Western Prelacy Divan, during the initial meetings, “the committee concurred that the use of the Armenian language, both oral and written, is in decline, and that the ability to understand and communicate in Armenian is vital to the sustainability of Armenian identity and sense of belonging.” Thus, the committee finds that it is essential to find a solution to remedy this critical situation. “The Committee adopted a scientific approach; to analyze the research and statistics to diagnose the problem and draft a program accordingly with far-reaching vision, strategic goals and an action plan for a de-centralized movement with the involvement of schools, churches, organizations, political parties, media, and individuals involved in the field” (Western Prelacy

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<sup>32</sup> All three committees share many of the same members.



Divan). At this point, this is the most up to date information on the proceedings of this committee.

## **Conclusion**

The strong public presence of Armenian in Los Angeles County is undeniable, as observed in its prevalence in social services, media, cultural events, and education. The recent growth of Armenian language programs in public schools along with the existence of numerous Armenian schools in the private domain attest to its robustness in the community and may contribute to the longevity of Armenian through the generations. However, to keep things in perspective, all of the Armenian language programs, including private schools, immersion programs, charter schools, and afterschool programs serve only 5-10% of the student-age population in this community (Kouloujian 2014). Moreover, the strong vitality of Armenian in this community mainly stems from large numbers and demographic concentration constantly fueled by the arrival of Armenian speakers. As census data on language use and the diagnoses of the various Task Forces indicate, language use and intergenerational transmission decline among U.S. born second and third generation Armenian-Americans. Once systematic immigration halts, time will show whether all of the efforts presented in this chapter will aid this community in the tide against strong pressures of language shift in the U.S.

## CHAPTER 3

### LINGUISTIC FEATURES

#### **Introduction**

In the great dearth of knowledge about Armenian as a heritage language, the investigation of linguistic features of Armenian heritage speakers constitutes no exception. Apart from Godson's study (2004) on the vowel production of Western Armenian heritage speakers, there are no known works on the depiction, evaluation, assessment, and analysis of the incomplete acquisition process among Armenian heritage speakers in the U.S. This chapter will focus on delineating some linguistic features of heritage speakers of Eastern Armenian in terms of phonology, morphology, register, and borrowings from English. As will be demonstrated in the analysis, several key driving forces may contribute to the exhibition of non-target like features: 1) the lack of exposure to the formal features of Armenian and the social contexts where these would be employed, 2) the absence of continuous formal education in Armenian, 3) the pluricentric nature of the Armenian language and the active presence of both standards in the Armenian community, and 4) the influence of English as the dominant majority language.

As noted in the introductory chapters of this dissertation, due to the linguistic distance between the standard language and the home variety, heritage speakers lack exposure and access to the formal features of Armenian. Since most interactions in the heritage language take place in the informal setting of the home and family, heritage speakers acquire the colloquial vernacular of the language, comprised of limited linguistic repertoires and restricted lexical and syntactic alternatives. Heritage speakers also lack the opportunities to access the social contexts in which the formal standard of the language would be employed and required. Due to the absence of exposure to the linguistic and social norms of the formal standard of the language, heritage

speakers typically do not possess the awareness and flexibility of controlling registers and their situational distribution.

Closely related to the discussion above is the fact that an overwhelming majority of Armenian heritage speakers do not receive continuous formal education in Armenian (see Chapter 2), which would provide access to resources such as literacy, exposure to the formal standard, grammatical awareness and competence, richer lexicon, and the social contexts to employ these. Among the plethora of benefits associated with literacy, knowledge of a script provides a visual counterpart to the aural input speakers receive, validating and solidifying the material while illuminating subtle linguistic nuances. Study of the language in an educational context would provide speakers with instruction in the formal standard, inherently integrating exposure to higher registers and a broader vocabulary range. Additionally, formal instruction would foster metalinguistic awareness of the language, supplementing speakers' existing skills with enhanced grammatical competence. Critically, formal education in Armenian would provide heritage speakers not only an opportunity to acquire all of the essential skills mentioned above, but also the social contexts in which these would be employed and required.

The pluricentric nature of the Armenian language, comprised of two literary standards and a multitude of local dialects, and the dynamic presence of multiple varieties in the Los Angeles community presents another potential source of influence on the analysis of linguistic features noted in this chapter. Eastern Armenian heritage speakers may encounter Western Armenian in a variety of possible scenarios including in the family (if a grandparent, parent, or close relative is a speaker of Western Armenian), among peers, in youth groups or cultural centers, and in the Armenian school context (as Western Armenian is the dominant language of instruction). The differences between the two standards in certain elements of phonology,

morphology, syntax, and lexico semantics (Cowe 1992; Hagopian 2005) may lead to diverse and competing sources of input for heritage speakers.

Moreover, the impact of English as the majority language as well as heritage speakers' dominant language undoubtedly plays a critical role in the analysis presented below. In a situation of language contact, the transfer of a range of linguistic features from the dominant language to the minority language can be expected. Additionally the grammatical differences between English and Armenian may also impact this situation. Particular features of Armenian that have no clear parallels in English, such as extensive agglutination, an elaborate case system, flexible word order, two rhotics in the phonetic system, the distinction between a singular and plural/formal second person pronoun, may influence the acquisition and mastery of these features.

The results presented here stem from the analysis of 27 learner interviews with UCLA students enrolled in an Eastern Armenian course. Decisively for this chapter, the interviews were conducted in Eastern Armenian with the understanding that participants would attempt to communicate in the heritage language to the best of their ability, using English minimally (to carry an important point across or ensure comprehension, for example). Each interview was approximately 40 minutes in length and consisted of questions related to the background, education, use of, and attitude to, the heritage language. The audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed with meticulous attention in order to accurately reflect the authentic features of the participants' speech. The transcripts were then coded for repeated linguistic features that stood out as divergences from the baseline. Here, once again, it is critical to note that the baseline language is colloquial, spoken Eastern Armenian and not the formal standard as promoted by

schooling, media, and literature<sup>33</sup> (Polinsky & Kagan 2007). The most frequent and prevalent deviations comprise the core of the material presented below. The International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) system has been used to represent Armenian elements in this chapter (see Appendix D for IPA charts on Eastern Armenian).

## **Phonology**

In the analysis of heritage speakers' grammatical systems, phonological competence is usually considered the strongest and best-preserved feature of linguistic knowledge, although often even this is not completely native like (Benmamoun et al. 2013). Coincidentally, one of the important studies that investigates phonetic deviations in heritage speakers focuses on the changes in vowel production among Western Armenian heritage speakers living in the U.S. (Godson 2004). Godson found that heritage speakers retain the 5-vowel system of Western Armenian in production, but the two front vowels /i/ and /ε/ and the central vowel /a/ differ in quality from those produced by native speakers. She argues that this might be the result of the effect of English on Western Armenian, as the only vowels impacted are those that have counterparts in English. In terms of production, the observations in this investigation also reveal certain deviations from the base line, especially in the case of U.S. born heritage speakers. Importantly, some of the divergences from target-like pronunciation can be explained by deficits in register, as they are common features of spoken, colloquial Eastern Armenian, while others are true phonological deviances, representative of this group of heritage speakers.

Some expected phenomena among the heritage speakers who participated in this study, both U.S. and foreign born, include the dropping of the consonants ɲ [ʁ] and ɭ [ɬ], particularly in medial and final positions, and never in initial positions, and the replacement of the postalveolar

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<sup>33</sup> Comparisons made to standard, literary Armenian will be explicitly noted.

voiceless aspirated affricate ջ, [tʃʰ] with the postalveolar voiceless fricative շ, [ʃ]. These occurrences can be explained by the fact that the tendencies they display are quite common in colloquial Eastern Armenian; however, it should be noted that a native speaker would have good mastery of the spectrum of registers in Armenian along with their social contexts and not drop sounds in a formal setting such as an interview. Therefore, it is essential to note that in the first three cases discussed below, the shortcomings are not related to lack of mastery of the phonetic system, but a lack of control over register. Unsurprisingly, the only variants heritage speakers may have ever encountered would have been the colloquial versions with the dropped sounds.

In the case of the uvular fricative դ [ɣ], speakers often fail to pronounce it in medial and final positions, as this is quite common in colloquial Eastern Armenian (Hagopian 2005). Here are a few examples, in which many of the words are already reduced, colloquial variants to begin with.

կողմի- > կոմի “side” gen./dat. sing.

[kɔɰmi] -> [komi]

որտեղ -> որտե “where”

[vɔɽɛɰ] -> [vɔɽɛ]

ընդեղ -> ընդե “there” (reduced, colloquial version of այնտեղ [ɑjntɛɰ])

[əndɛɰ] -> [əndɛ]

ստեղ -> ստե “here” (reduced, colloquial version of այստեղ [ɑjstɛɰ])

[stɛɰ] -> [stɛ]

ըտեղ -> ըտե “there” (reduced, colloquial version of այդտեղ [ɑjɽtɛɰ])

[əstɛɰ] -> [əstɛ]

թող -> թոն “let it”

[t<sup>h</sup>oʁ] -> [t<sup>h</sup>o]

The most common sound loss occurred in the case of the alveolar later approximant ʎ, [ʎ] only in final positions and almost exclusively in the past participle, which is formed with the aid of the suffix -ել, [-el] (Dum-Tragut 2009). The tendency to not articulate the final ʎ, [ʎ] is quite common in colloquial Eastern Armenian when using the perfect or pluperfect tense, “as in e.g. ես նրան չեմ տեսել(լ): *jɛs nɛrɑn tʃ<sup>h</sup>ɛm tɛsɛ[ʎ]*. ‘I have not seen him.’” (Dum-Tragut 2009: 223).

The following are some examples of past participles from this investigation:

կարդացել -> կարդացե, past participle of verb “to read”

[kɑrdɑts<sup>h</sup>el] -> [kɑrdɑts<sup>h</sup>ɛ]

ավարտել -> ավարտե, past participle of verb “to graduate, to complete”

[ɑvɑrtɛl] -> [ɑvɑrtɛ]

սովորել -> սովորե, past participle of verb “to learn, to study”

[sovɔrɛl] -> [sovɔrɛ]

տեղափոխվել -> տեղափոխվե, past participle of verb “to move (relocate)”

[tɛkɑp<sup>h</sup>oχvɛl] -> [tɛkɑp<sup>h</sup>oχvɛ]

արել -> արե, past participle of verb “to do”

[ɑrɛl] -> [ɑrɛ]

Another interesting phenomenon that reflects tendencies in colloquial Eastern Armenian is the replacement of the postalveolar voiceless aspirated affricate ʂ, [tʃ<sup>h</sup>] with the postalveolar voiceless fricative ʃ, [ʃ]. The rule for this tendency in the colloquial vernacular is the following:

if ջ, [tʰ] is followed by a consonant without a break (a comma, for example), it is pronounced as a ʒ, [ʃ] both within the same word and at the end of a preceding word (Harutunyan, Մայրենի լեզվի դասեր (Lessons in the Mother Tongue)<sup>34</sup>, Feb. 22, 2014). This was particularly common in the usage of the negated indefinite article ոչ մի, [votʰmi] “not one,” the negative indefinite pronoun/adjective ոչ մեկ, [votʰmɛk], “no one,” and the interrogative pronoun ինչքան [intʰkʰan], “how much,” resulting in their pronunciation with ʒ, [ʃ] as ոչ մի, [voʃmi], ոչ մեկ, [voʃmɛk], and ինչքան [inʃkʰan].

Along with the features presented above that correlate with those of colloquial spoken Eastern Armenian, there are also a few tendencies, which may be specific to heritage speakers’ profile. One of the most striking features in this investigation was the loss of distinction between the two rhotics in favor of the flap, particularly in the case of speakers born in the U.S. Although it is highly unusual that rhotics would be distinguished alphabetically, Armenian includes two rhotics in its consonant system: the flap [r] and the trill [r̄]. The former is much more widespread and can be found in all positions, while the distribution of the trill is comparatively restricted (Dum-Tragut 2009). Many U.S. born heritage speakers pronounce the trill [r̄] in all positions (initial, medial, final) as a flap [r], losing the distinction between the two rhotics. Below are a few examples:

Initial position: ռուսերեն [rusɛrɛn] “Russian” pronounced as [rusɛrɛn]

Medial position: առաջ [aratʰ] “before” pronounced as [aratʰ]

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<sup>34</sup> Մայրենի լեզվի դասեր (Lessons in the Mother Tongue) is a group on Facebook comprised of linguists and nonprofessionals who take interest in the Armenian language. Users post questions about any feature related to Armenian and members respond, frequently with references to useful resources (dictionaries, textbooks, articles, etc.)



մոռացա [morats<sup>h</sup>a] “I forgot” (first person, sing, aorist) pronounced as [morats<sup>h</sup>a]

խայտառակ [xajtarak] “ignominious, disgraceful, affronted” pronounced as [xajtarak]

հեռու [hɛru] “far” pronounced as [hɛru]

Final position: բառ [bar] “word” pronounced as [bar]

տառ [tar] “letter” pronounced as [tar]

դեռ [dɛr] “yet, still” pronounced as [dɛr]

պատճառ [pattʃar] “reason” as [pattʃar]

In addition to the examples from this group of participants, this tendency of generalizing the flap [r] has been observed in many classes of heritage learners in the American context. As expected, heritage learners display difficulties in the perception as well as production of the two rhotics. During spelling exercises, students often confuse which “r” they need to use, favoring the flap over the trill. Multiple factors may contribute to this phenomenon including the widespread distribution of the flap [r] in Eastern Armenian and the absence of a trill [ɾ] in English. Moreover, the convergence of the two in a tendency to generalize in favor of the soft flap [r] in Western Armenian (Cowe 1992; Hagopian 2005) may also have an impact on speakers who have exposure to both standards. Future studies specifically designed to test the perception and production of the two rhotics and the factors that may contribute to the loss of their distinction can further illuminate this trend. For example, it would be interesting to investigate the production of the rhotics among heritage speakers of Eastern Armenian in Russia, as Russian only has a trill [ɾ], in order to gauge the influence of the dominant language on heritage speakers’

production. Interestingly, in casual Eastern Armenian, particularly in Yerevan, the trend emerged in the opposite direction as the trilled [r] was commonly generalized as a possible consequence of Russian interference (Hagopian 2005).

Another noteworthy feature in the pronunciation of the heritage language speakers of Eastern Armenian who took part in this study involved the loss of the glide j [j] in the suffix – ություն, [-ut<sup>h</sup>jun ]. This is a very productive suffix, usually added to derive abstract, non-countable or collective nouns from nouns, as well as adjectives and verbs (Dum-Tragut 2009). The aspirated, voiceless ք [t<sup>h</sup>] in this suffix is palatalized in colloquial Eastern Armenian and viewed as highly conventional even in public fora, e.g. ազատություն [azatut<sup>h</sup> jun], “freedom” will be pronounced as [azatut<sup>h</sup>jun] (Dum-Tragut 2009). Since heritage speakers are most comfortable and familiar with the colloquial language, this tendency to palatalize is extremely common. However, in addition to palatalization, heritage speakers, particularly those born in the U.S., also consistently drop the glide j [j] in this very common suffix, as can be seen in the following examples.

մանկություն -> մանկուցուն, “childhood”

mankut<sup>h</sup> jun -> mankuts<sup>h</sup>un

խոսակցություն -> խոսակցուցուն, “conversation”

չօսակցություն -> չօսակցստս<sup>h</sup>un

դժվարություն -> դժվարուցուն, “difficulty”

dzvarut<sup>h</sup> jun -> dzvaruts<sup>h</sup>un

պատմություն -> պատմուցուն, “history, story”

patmut<sup>h</sup> jun -> patmuts<sup>h</sup>un

It is difficult to ascertain whether this loss and the others discussed above are due to a lack of perception in the first place or later difficulties in production. Given the fact that heritage speakers typically acquire the colloquial language in an informal environment, it is not surprising that they are only familiar with and produce phonetically reduced and altered variants common in the vernacular. Additionally, as heritage speakers' main exposure to the language is aural, they often lack the literacy to support the informal variant with its complete written and formal counterpart. Moreover, their exposure to competing input from Western Armenian, in the case of the convergence of the two rhotics, for example, may also impact their phonetic system. Finally, the influence of English, particularly in its phonetic differences with Armenian, also plays a role in shaping Armenian heritage speakers' phonetic features. More research on the phonological competence of heritage speakers of Eastern Armenian will undoubtedly clarify and supplement some of the preliminary observations noted above.

### **Morphology**

The study of heritage speakers' profiles in morphology generally stands as the most productive area of investigation in heritage language grammars (Polinsky 2011). At this level, heritage speakers tend to over-regularize morphological paradigms, with the elimination of irregular and infrequent forms. In addition to overgeneralizing in both form and meaning, heritage speakers are also extremely good at maintaining fossilized forms of high-frequency items. They also show a much smaller range of morphological case distinctions when compared to the baseline (Polinsky & Kagan 2007). Significantly, Benmamoun et al. point out that "morphological deficits in heritage languages are asymmetric: they seem to be more pronounced and pervasive in nominal morphology than in verbal morphology" (2013: 20). Error rates in nominal morphology are consistently higher in comparison with deficiencies in verbal

morphology. Particularly vulnerable in heritage languages is inflectional morphology, specifically in languages that exhibit robust morphological systems, including regular and irregular paradigms (Benmamoun et al. 2013). Difficulties with inflectional morphology may be more pronounced in an Anglophone environment due to the lack of explicit comparable features in the English language.

The investigation of the morphological features of heritage speakers of Eastern Armenian reveals a very similar pattern to that mentioned above; verbal morphology is largely intact, while nominal morphology stands more vulnerable with over-regularization and over-generalization of declension systems and confusion of case usage and markings, particularly in the oblique cases. Modern Eastern Armenian distinguishes seven morphological cases that fulfill various semantic and syntactic functions: nominative (subject), accusative (direct object), genitive (possession), dative (indirect object or direct animate object), ablative (origin), instrumental (means), and locative (location/position). Basic declensions are categorized according to the changes that nouns undergo in the genitive case, formed by taking a case marker, mutating, or undergoing both (Sakayan 2007). There are eight declension categories comprised of the more productive vowel declension classes (-i, -u, -an, -va, and -oj), the relatively unproductive consonant declension classes (-a and -o), in addition to some deviating or antiquated declensions. The most productive class is the -i declension, with which most Eastern Armenian nouns are declined, in addition to its most frequent use in colloquial Armenian (Dum-Tragut 2009).

The most common tendency in noun declensions observed in this investigation among heritage speakers of Eastern Armenian is the overgeneralization and overuse of the -i declension, resulting in its mistaken imposition on many of the other declension classes. Regardless of which declension class a noun belongs to, heritage speakers often indiscriminately decline it following

the -i declension pattern. The data contains nouns from almost all of the classes declined as –i declension nouns. Some prominent and frequent examples will be given below.

The nouns հայր / [hɑjɾ] / “father,” մայր / [mɑjɾ] / “mother,” եղբայր / [jɛʁbɑjɾ] / “brother,” and their compounds (e.g. հորեղբայր, [horjɛʁbɑjɾ], “paternal uncle”) belong to the -o declension. The genitive singular forms of these nouns are as follows respectively: հոր / [hor], մոր / [mor], եղբոր / [jɛʁbor]. However, heritage speakers consistently decline these nouns using the –i declension, resulting in the following non-standard forms: հայրի / [hɑjɾi], մայրի / [mɑjɾi], եղբայրի / [jɛʁbɑjɾi]. This tendency is not limited to the genitive case, as participants declined these nouns in all of the cases using the -i declension instead of the required –o declension. In one unique case a participant declined the noun եղբայր / [jɛʁbɑjɾ] “brother” by forming the correct –o declension in the genitive singular, but then attached an additional –i genitive ending to ensure conformity to the -i declension pattern (e.g. եղբորի / [jɛʁbori]).

The nouns հայր / [hɑjɾ] / “father,” մայր / [mɑjɾ] / “mother” եղբայր / [jɛʁbɑjɾ] / “brother,” although very common kinship terms, are not the variants regularly used in colloquial Eastern Armenian. Instead, the more familiar մամա / [mɑmɑ] / “mom/mommy,” պապա / [pɑpɑ] / “dad, daddy,” ախպեր/ապեր / [ɑxɛɾ/ɑɛɾ] / “brother” are employed in everyday speech. The first two of these, մամա / [mɑmɑ] and պապա / [pɑpɑ] conveniently belong to the -i declension, causing no difficulty. But one of the familiar forms of the noun brother, ախպեր / [ɑxɛɾ] is classified in the -o declension; not surprisingly, speakers often decline it with the -i declension producing forms such as ախպերի / [ɑxɛɾi] instead of the standard ախպոր / [ɑxɛɾɔɾ].

Like the case above, commonly used nouns that belong to the -u declension class are also declined as if belonging to the -i class. For example, the nouns ընկերուհի / [ənkɛruhi] / “female friend/girlfriend” and ամուսին / [amusin] / “husband” form their genitive as follows: ընկերուհու / [ənkɛruhu], ամուսնու / [amusnu]. However, participants declined them following the –i declension pattern with forms such as these: ընկերուհիիս հետ [ənkɛruhiis hɛt], “with my girlfriend” (requiring gen. sing. with post position “with”) instead of ընկերուհուս հետ [ənkɛruhus hɛt]; and ամուսինիս հետ [amusinis hɛt] “with my husband” (requiring gen. sing. with post position “with”) instead of [amusnus hɛt]. Additionally, in the last example, when declined, the noun ամուսին, [amusin] is subject to vocalic reduction, losing its final vowel /i/ in the oblique cases (ամուսնու, [amusnu] (gen. sing.)); however, as will be mentioned later, heritage speakers often fail to observe rules of vocalic reduction.

Two very commonly used nouns belonging to the –oj declension are also consistently declined with the i-declension pattern: ընկեր, [ənkɛr] “friend, boyfriend” and քույր [k<sup>h</sup> ujɾ] “sister.” Instead of adhering to their genitive forms in –oj: ընկերոջ / [ənkɛrodʒ] and քրոջ / [k<sup>h</sup>ər odʒ], they are declined as ընկերի / [ənkɛri] and քույրի / [k<sup>h</sup> ujri].

Nouns belonging to the consonant –a declension are no exception to assimilation to the -i declension class by heritage speakers. A large group of nouns that belong to this category are abstract nouns ending in the suffix –ութիւն, [-ut<sup>h</sup>jun]. The standard declension pattern for such a noun would look like the example of the noun ուրախութիւն, [uraxut<sup>h</sup>jun] “happiness” below:

Nom.Acc.	ուրախութիւն	[uraxut <sup>h</sup> jun]
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<b>Gen./Dat.</b>	<b>ուրախության</b>	<b>[uraxut<sup>h</sup>jan]</b>
Abl.	ուրախությունից	[uraxut <sup>h</sup> junits <sup>h</sup> ]
<b>Inst.</b>	<b>ուրախությամբ/ուրախությունով</b>	<b>[uraxut<sup>h</sup>jamb]/[uraxut<sup>h</sup>junov]</b>
Loc.	ուրախությունում	[uraxut <sup>h</sup> junum]

Heritage speakers commonly decline these nouns as belonging to the -i declension class, resulting in the following paradigm, with non-standard genitive/dative and instrumental case markings:

Nom.Acc.	ուրախություն	[uraxut <sup>h</sup> jun]
<b>Gen./Dat.</b>	<b>ուրախությունի</b>	<b>[uraxut<sup>h</sup>juni]</b>
Abl.	ուրախությունից	[uraxut <sup>h</sup> junits <sup>h</sup> ]
<b>Inst.</b>	<b>ուրախությունով</b>	<b>[uraxut<sup>h</sup>junov]</b>
Loc.	ուրախությունում	[uraxut <sup>h</sup> junum]

In colloquial Eastern Armenian the instrumental ending –ով ov, which is the typical case ending for –i declension nouns, is also used for nouns ending in –ություն, [-ut<sup>h</sup>jun] (Dum-Tragut 2009).

However, this is not the case for the genitive/dative case endings, as forms such as ուրախությունի, [uraxut<sup>h</sup>juni] are unacceptable either in formal or colloquial Eastern Armenian.

In one case, even the irregular declension pattern of the interrogative pronoun ով / [ov] / “who” is absorbed into the –i declension class. The genitive/dative form of the pronoun is ում / [um] / “whose, whom,” yet one speaker produced the following form, ովին / [ovin] with a typical -i declension dative marker.

Due to heritage speakers' limited exposure to Armenian, the pattern of standardizing in which the most frequent declension class is over-generalized and imposed on non-frequent or irregular nouns as demonstrated above is to be quite expected. This same tendency may be observed among monolingual Armenian children, who eventually grow out of this inclination with the aid of formal instruction and continuous and frequent exposure to the language.

As mentioned in an example above, heritage speakers also have difficulty adhering to rules of vocalic reduction. The phonological environment determines vocalic reduction in Eastern Armenian, based on the change of stress during inflection or word formation (Dum-Tragut 2009). Reductions mainly affect the high vowels [i] and [u], resulting in their absolute deletion or reduction to schwa [ə] (not marked in script), and in the case of diphthongs, a reduction to monophthongs (Dum-Tragut 2009). Heritage speakers often maintain the high vowels or diphthongs, failing to reduce or delete them in unstressed positions. For example, in the noun տուն / [tun] / "house," the [u] is reduced to a schwa [ə] during inflection, but heritage speakers produce forms such as տունից / [tunits<sup>h</sup>] / "house" (abl. sing.) instead of տնից / [tənit<sup>h</sup>]. Similarly, in the noun խումբ / [xumb] / "group" speakers will not drop the [u] and produce forms such as խումբիս / [xumbis] / "my group" (gen. sing. + possessive suffix) instead of խմբիս / [xəmbis]. The noun գիրք / girk<sup>h</sup> / "book" serves as a good example to demonstrate the lack of reduction of the vowel [i] because heritage speakers use forms such as գիրքից / [girk<sup>h</sup>its<sup>h</sup>] / "book" (abl. sing.) instead of the standard գրքից / [gərk<sup>h</sup>its<sup>h</sup>] with the [i] reduced to a schwa [ə]. As for diphthongs, heritage speakers often do not reduce them to monophthongs as in the example of the adjective գունավոր / [gunavor] / "colorful" derived from the noun գույն / [gujn] / "color"; as a result, speakers produce forms without any alteration, such as գույնավոր /



[gɯjnavor] instead of the standard reduced form ԳՆԱՎՈՐ / [gɯnavor].

In addition to the lacking frequency of parallel features in English and the absence of formal training in Armenian grammar, which would lead to difficulties in adhering to rules of the vocalic reduction noted above, the influence of diverging Western Armenian input must also be considered. As Hagopian (2005) explains, Western Armenian is characterized by a current trend to eliminate the vowel shift in common words so that non-shifted forms are quite typical and widespread in modern conversational Western Armenian. Therefore, heritage speakers who have exposure to both Eastern and Western Armenian will encounter differing variants, perhaps impacting their selection of the non-shifted forms.

### **Register**

As mentioned above, some of the main features in a standard profile of typical heritage language speakers and learners include their relative familiarity with informal registers and their inability to use formal and academic registers (Achugar 2003; Schwartz 2003; Valdés 2001). The most critical factor behind this “undeveloped” register (Valdés and Geoffrion-Vinci 1998) stems from the fact that most heritage speakers attain their primary and secondary education in English, while their repertoire in the heritage language is acquired mainly through interaction with family only. Heritage language speakers do not develop the “formal” or “academic” register due to the lack of opportunity for formal study of their heritage language (Said-Mohand 2011).

In her comprehensive research on Spanish heritage learners, Valdés (1998) delineates some markers of deficient academic register such as limited lexical range, few strategies for managing academic instructions, restricted resources for characterization of one’s or another’s contribution to the discussion, and the difficulty of presenting oneself as competent and knowledgeable, which make bilinguals “appear to be young, unsophisticated, and sometimes

even inarticulate” (494). Upon taking a language course, students become aware that they have great difficulty in using their heritage language for expressing theoretical and abstract concepts. This difficulty partially rests on their lack of lexical density and syntactic complexity (Said-Mohand 2011). One study found that bilingual speakers tend to use more coordinate sentences than embedded clauses when compared with monolinguals (Solé 1981: 28).

Lacking competence in register, both formal and academic, stands as a prevalent feature of the speech of the participants in this study. The speakers’ own awareness of their inability to produce “literary,” “sophisticated” or “formal” Armenian is quite remarkable. Repeatedly participants in this study and heritage learners in Armenian courses over the years have voiced their desire to “speak Armenian like an adult.” To bring this characterization full circle, one of the participants in this investigation categorized her (in)ability in the heritage language by the following statement: “I think like an eighteen year old, but when I speak Armenian, I sound like a five year old.”

In terms of deficiencies in academic register, all of the factors noted above, including deficits in lexical density and syntactic complexity, are present in this investigation. It is the speakers themselves who remark on the necessity to expand and diversify their lexicon, constantly stressing the need to acquire *more* and *bigger* words; astutely grasping that wider lexical range contributes to a higher register. Indeed, compounding is a productive means of word formation in Armenian, leading to very long abstract nouns, for example, that may contain 5-6 syllables. Additionally, in accord with Solé’s (1981) findings, a tendency to avoid embedded clauses and rely on coordinate sentences is typical. Chunks of speech often comprise simple independent clauses, with few attempts at embedding or subordination. Often learners will code-switch to English when they come across syntactically challenging barriers. As a result,

elaborations, evaluations, and commentary on previous remarks are often produced in English.

A very basic difficulty most participants encountered during the interviews conducted for this study was the ability to use the proper form of address with the researcher. Like many other languages, Armenian distinguishes between two personal pronouns for the second person *you*: the informal դու [du] and the formal դուք [duk<sup>h</sup>], comparable to *tu* and *vous* in French or *tú* and *usted* in Spanish. The informal դու [du] is a singular form used to address close friends, relatives, and children, as well as members of the same social group such as classmates, students, co-workers, etc. The personal pronoun դուք [duk<sup>h</sup>] has two applications: it serves as the plural form of the personal pronoun to address two or more people and as the formal or polite way to address a stranger or a person of higher status. With the exception of two participants who immigrated in their teenage years and several highly proficient speakers, most students either only used the informal pronoun or started with the formal but were unable to sustain the usage throughout the interview, consistently slipping into the informal.

Heritage speakers often first become aware of the need to use the formal *you* through an encounter with an unacquainted Armenian-speaking adult or in a language classroom. One student recounted her first experience of such a situation:

Մի քանի տարի առաջ գնացել էիք chiropractor-ի մոտ: Հետո ասեց. «Բարեւ ձեզ: Ո՞նց եք»: Ես է(լ) ասեցի. «Լավ եմ: Դու ո՞նց ես»: Մեկ է(լ) (laugh), շուտ էկավ ասեց. «Ոնց ԵՔ»: Ես է(լ) ... 15 տարեկան էի, ասեցի էս ինչի՞ ջղայնացավ էս մարդը: Հետո պապայիս շուտ էկա ասեցի. «Բայց ինքը մի հատ մարդ ա, ինչի՞ պիտի ասեմ ոնց ԵՔ»: Բայց էս հետո էր, հետո պապաս ասեց. «Չէ: Պիտի ասես ոնց էք: Ո՞նց թե չգիտես:» Հետո դրանից հետո ըմ I realized (laugh) որ պտի ավելի լավ հայերեն խոսամ, especially with people older because իրանք ջղայնանում են (laugh):

A few years ago we had gone to a **chiropractor**. And then he said: “Hello [formal/plural]. How are you? [formal/plural]” And I said: “I am fine. How are you? [informal/singular].” And then (laugh) he turned around and said: “How are YOU?”

*[formal/plural]*.” And I...I was 15 years old, I said, why did this man get so mad. And then I turned around to my dad and said: “But he is only one person, why do I have to say ‘how are YOU?’ *[formal/plural]*” But this was after, later my dad said: “No, you have to say, ‘how are you?’ *[formal/plural]*. What do you mean you don’t know?” And then after that **I realized** (laugh) that I have to speak better Armenian, **especially with people older because** they get angry (laugh).

*[L.A. / Age 20 / F / Birthplace – Glendale, CA / Parents repatriated to Armenia from Iran]*

As can be seen from this encounter, the heritage speaker was quite aware of the pronoun’s function as the plural form of *you*, but not of its status as a marker of formality and politeness. Even after explicit instruction about the various forms of address and the importance of distinguishing the formal and informal *you*, many heritage learners will automatically slip into the informal because of habit. Causes for this tendency to overuse the informal certainly include the absence of such a distinction in English, lack of formal education, and access to environments where the formal register would be required. A potential investigation that could shed light on this situation would involve observing the same phenomenon among heritage speakers of Armenian whose dominant language also possesses such an explicit formal/informal distinction, among Armenians in Russia or France, for example.

### **Language Contact and Transfer**

Whenever several languages co-exist in a community, the contact between these languages results in the adoption of some elements or features from one language into another, referred to as “interference,” “transfer,” or “cross-linguistic influence.” Theoretically either language can act as a source or recipient; however, borrowing usually occurs from a prestige language into a nonprestige one (Romaine 2010). “Although the term ‘borrowing’ has often been used to refer specifically to the importation of words from one language to another, it is sometimes used in a broad sense to encompass the transfer of linguistic features of any kind or

size from one language to another as a result of contact” (Romaine 2010:36). Not surprisingly, speakers in multilingual communities will draw on more than one language to satisfy various communicative needs. Such speech, characterized by switching from one language to another, including doing so within the same conversation and even in the same utterance, is labeled as “code-switching” or “code-mixing.” Attitudes about code-switching have come a long way, from being regarded as a sign of lacking competence and laziness to a complex and legitimate mode of communication, that serves “important functions in communities, where they embody the linguistic and cultural hybridity of their speakers” (Romaine 2010:28). This section will describe elements of code-switching between Eastern Armenian and English among heritage speakers of Eastern Armenian in the form of borrowings, calques, and semantic extensions.

Although the heritage speakers in this study were encouraged to speak as much Armenian as possible, code-switching was persistently present. As the Heritage Language Survey Report confirms, the sole use of the heritage language is not very common; instead, participants reported mostly using their heritage language in combination with English, which implies code-switching to varying degrees (Carreira et al. 2009). Similarly, in this investigation, borrowings from English were commonly employed, including many words and phrases that have counterparts in Armenian, in addition to examples without precise and full equivalents. As Romaine (2010) suggests, this process of borrowing words is to be expected in “immigrant bilingualism” for the simple fact that in a new setting, “speakers will encounter many things specific to the new environment or culture and will adopt readily available words from the local language to describe them” (35).

Before turning to the detailed descriptions of the types of borrowings observed among Armenian heritage language speakers, it is important to take into consideration that the data

collected were undoubtedly shaped by the preselected questions during the interviews. Even though the interviews allowed for open-ended responses, deviations, and lengthy narratives, responses were based on questions that sought to collect general linguistic autobiographies. Thus the overall topics circled around language development, language use, language (re)learning, and attitudes toward the heritage language.

Given the influence of the abovementioned foci during the data collection process, many of the borrowed words and phrases from English revolved around those preselected topics. In the process of compiling borrowings, certain thematic categories stood out, such as words and phrases relating to language, academic/college life, and media/entertainment/technology (see Appendix C). In terms of language, participants borrowed basic words to describe the languages they have studied (“Spanish,” “Tagalog,” “Latin”), words describing skills and grammatical aspects related to language (“spelling,” “translate,” “verb,” “grammar,” “skills,” “delivery,” “declension,” “punctuation”), as well as some verbs to render certain difficulties (“detect,” “stumble,” “stutter”). Not surprisingly, one of the largest categories of loanwords included those related to participants’ academic/college life. These comprised a range of borrowings describing educational institutions (“elementary school,” “high school,” “Saturday school,” “after school program,” “community college,” “magnet school,” “medical school,” “summer school”), subjects studied (“sociology,” “foreign language,” “literature,” “psychology,” “history”), college life (“roommate,” “apartment,” “campus”) and an array of terms that comprise the various elements of the academic experience. A final category was comprised by words related to media and entertainment as well as technology. Participants frequently used English words to describe entertainment related categories (“advertisements,” “classical music,” “folk music,” “news,” “soap opera”) as well as the technology used to access them (“website,” “on-line,” “lap-top,”

“keyboard,” “email,” “download”). Although many of the loanwords used during code-switching have comparable equivalents in Eastern Armenian, heritage speakers may not have been exposed to them; or in the case of exposure, they may have a quicker process of retrieval from English. Also, in some cases, a counterpart in Armenian may not express the full semantic range or nuances of the English term. Additionally, certain academic categories such as receiving *units* for a course, sprawling college *campuses* on extensive grounds, *GPA*s, *minors* and the like often do not have equivalents in the Armenian educational system; therefore, adopting the English terminology is the most convenient option. The novelty of many things specific to the American setting and environment may not even have entered the ordinary speech of many of the participants’ parents, leading to code-switching at home<sup>35</sup>.

In addition to the borrowing of content words described above, function words such as discourse markers were rampantly present in the code-switching patterns of Armenian heritage speakers. Discourse markers can be defined as “particles that contribute to the overall coherence of discourse by signaling relationships across utterances” without changing the semantic relationship of the elements connected by the marker and affecting the grammaticality of the utterance (Torres & Potowski 2008:263). Literature on the use of discourse markers in language contact situations presents patterns ranging from two bilingual discourse systems coexisting in differentiated functions (Solomon 1995) to the partial replacement (de Rooji 2000; Hlavac 2006) or complete disappearance of native markers (Gross & Salmons 2000; Fuller 2001). In this investigation, English language discourse markers such as *so, well, you know, yeah, like, I mean, I guess, actually, basically* and the like were extremely frequent in the data, even among the

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<sup>35</sup> Sometimes borrowed words are phonetically altered in order to achieve a more authentic Armenian pronunciation. Russian pronunciation may also be common in the case of Eastern Armenian speakers and French for Western Armenian speakers.

most highly proficient participants. Inversely, the use of native Armenian discourse markers was relatively rare.

The transfer of English language discourse markers into the speech of Armenian heritage language learners has been frequently observed among students in Armenian courses at college level. The same trend is quite active among K-12 students in Armenian schools in Los Angeles, whose Armenian one teacher appropriately and humorously labeled as *like-eren*. He created this description by compounding *like*, an extremely common English language discourse marker among American youth and *-eren*, the suffix used in Armenian to designate languages in order to capture the students' excessively frequent incorporation of *like* in their speech in Armenian (Nazarian 2011).

Calquing or loan translation, another common linguistic process in situations of language contact, features prominently among immigrant bilingual communities. A calque is a type of borrowing through literal, word-by-word translation from one language into another (Romaine 2010). Armenian heritage speakers are no exception in this tendency to translate English expressions into Armenian verbatim, some of which have become quite common and acceptable in the community, others that may produce humorous results, and all of which may not be easily intelligible to monolingual Armenian speakers.

Some calques are simple direct translations such as *առաջի անուն*, *first name* (instead of name) and *մեջտեղի անուն*, *middle name* (there is no middle name in Armenian) due to cultural differences such as naming practices in this case<sup>36</sup>. Armenian heritage speakers will often incorporate the patterns of English prepositions instead of relying on the complex

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<sup>36</sup> Armenian naming practices include a given name and a surname, which are not labeled as “first” or “last.” As such the “second” name is the surname. There is no practice of giving second or middle names.



Armenian case system to convey phrases such as հայերենի մեջ, *in Armenian*, i.e. I can't do that in Armenian (instead of using the inst. case), սեպտեմբերի մեջ, *in September* (instead of using the dat. case to mark time), and campus-ի վրա, *on campus* or Կանադայի մեջ, *in Canada*<sup>37</sup> (instead of the locative case to mark location). Another tendency also observed among Russian heritage speakers in the U.S. (Kagan & Dillon 2010) is the usage of the literal translation of the verb “to take” to address many nuanced situations that have a set of counterparts in Armenian; for example դաս վերցնել, *to take a class* (instead of to enroll/register/attend a class), դասատու/դասախոս վերցնել, *to take a teacher/professor* (instead of to attend/be in a teacher's/professor's class), քննություն վերցնել, *to take an exam* (instead of to hand in/give in an exam). Additionally, heritage speakers also absorb the system of English phrasal verbs and produce examples such as ընկեր սարքել, *make friends* (instead of the verb ըկերանալ, to befriend), կենսաց տալ, *give a toast* (instead of կենսաց ասել, to say a toast), հետ պատասխանել, *to speak/answer back* (instead of պատասխանել, to respond/to answer).

Semantic extension stands as the final category of borrowing from English that is quite visible in the speech of heritage speakers of Eastern Armenian. Semantic extension represents the process of extending the semantic scope of a word in a minority community language to correspond to the semantic range of a related English word. Exactly parallel to the use of the Russian word *shkola* (school - K-12) by Russians in the U.S. to refer to college and even graduate school (Kagan & Dillon 2010) is the use of the word դպրոց, [dprots<sup>h</sup>] (elementary and secondary school) by Armenian heritage speakers to refer to institutions of higher education.

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<sup>37</sup> It must be noted that the interference of Western Armenian may play a role, as Western Armenian does not have the locative case and instead often relies on the use of postposition *in* to designate location.

Similar examples include the extension of the word նոտա, [nota] (musical note) to describe taking notes in an academic setting, the translation of թուղթ, [tʰuɾtʰ] (sheet of paper) to fit every semantic possibility of its English equivalent such as newspaper or an academic essay, and the use of սպիտակ, [spitak] (white) to depict a racially white person. Additionally, in many cases speakers do not distinguish between adjectives rendering a certain language in opposition to a related adjective indicating a person's nationality or citizenship. Armenian distinguishes between անգլերեն, [aŋgɛɾɛn] (English language) and անգլիացի, [aŋgliatsʰi] (an Englishman) or ամերիկացի, [amerikatsʰi] (an American), yet heritage speakers use the adjective designated for language to describe people (e.g. անգլերեն ընկերներս, [aŋgɛɾɛn ɛnkɛɾnɛɾəs], my English language friends instead of my American friends).

As can be seen from the various examples of borrowings, calques, and semantic extension, the impact of English on the speech of Armenian heritage speakers cannot be underestimated. Although some community members view these trends as concrete signs of decline and loss of Armenian, these processes are found among many other immigrant languages and can also be looked upon as means of helping to maintain the heritage language to some degree (Potowski 2010).

## **Conclusion**

The findings in this chapter, depicting features of phonology, morphology, register, and borrowings, as observed in the linguistic system of Armenian heritage speakers and learners echo the general patterns of heritage speakers' grammatical systems across languages. These observations can ideally be expanded and supplemented with studies specifically designed to test and assess particular linguistic features. The value of such investigations cannot be

overestimated for a variety of groups, including linguists, researchers, and educators. This type of work also contributes to the continuing examination of heritage language grammar across languages.

## CHAPTER 4

### LANGUAGE USE PATTERNS: COMPARTMENTALIZATION ACROSS MULTIPLE DOMAINS

#### Introduction

Շ: Ո՞ր լեզվով ես երազ տեսնում: Եթե երազներդ հիշում ես:  
Ն: Ը կախված ա, ասենք թե ինչ ա լինում երազիս մեջ: Եթե մոր կամ ընտանիքի  
հետ կապված երազ ա՝ հայերեն ա: Բայց եթե ասենք թե, չգիտեմ, մի հաս երազ  
էի ունեցել որ basketball էի խաղում professionally – էտի անգլերեն էր so...

S: In which language do you see dreams? If you remember your dreams.  
N: Uh, it depends, let's say, on what's happening in my dream. If it's a dream connected  
with mother or family, it's in Armenian. But if, let's say - I don't know - I had a dream  
that I was playing **basketball professionally**, that one was in English, **so...**

*[N.V. / Age 21 / M / Birthplace – Yerevan, Armenia/ Age at immigration– 1.5]*

As the passage above indicates, the choice of language for bilinguals such as heritage speakers is not an accidental function of whim, but rather an intricate process governed by various nuanced factors, reflecting a division of language use patterns into various domains. This chapter will designate four domains of linguistic compartmentalization among heritage speakers of Eastern Armenian based on categories of age, gender, medium, and space, expanding on traditional classifications of domains of language use. Compartmentalization in this case of bilingualism signifies the partition of the use of two languages into different domains based on various categories or triggers.

#### **Immigrant Bilingualism, Language Use Patterns, and Compartmentalization**

Immigrant bilingualism in the U.S. tends to follow a specific generational pattern in which bilinguals of different generations have varying proficiencies in English and their heritage language. Research shows that competency in the heritage language declines with each

generation in the U.S., creating a bilingual continuum (Silva-Corvalan 1994; Valdés 2001; Fishman 1991; Tse 2001; Bakalian 1993; Vaux 1999). Typically, many first-generation immigrants tend to remain strongly dominant in their first language throughout their lives. Although others may acquire some English and become incipient bilinguals, they will still remain dominant in the heritage language. By the second and third generation, most members of the immigrant community acquire English quite well and show evidence of incomplete acquisition and loss of linguistic structures in their heritage language. “The majority of these individuals will be, if not English dominant, English preferent” (Valdés 2001: 43). Many, nevertheless, continue to function in two languages in order to communicate with members of the first generation. Beyond the third generation, few heritage language speakers retain a functional command of their language (Fishman 1991; Silva-Corvalan 2003; Veltman 2000), as most individuals of immigrant background become monolingual speakers of English by the fourth generation. Valdés (2001: 43) graphically represents the bilingualism of different generations in the chart below.

<b>Generation</b>	<b>Possible Language Characteristics</b>	
<b>1st Generation</b>	Monolinguals in Heritage Language <b>A</b>	Incipient Bilinguals <b>Ab</b>
<b>2nd and 3rd Generation</b>	Heritage Language Dominant <b>Ab</b>	English Dominant <b>aB</b>
<b>4th Generation</b>	English Dominant <b>Ba</b>	English Monolingual <b>B</b>

Aa – heritage language; Bb – English

Figure 4.1: Bilingualism of different generations (Valdés 2011)

Studies on Armenians in the U.S. (Bakalian 1993; LaPiere 1930; Nelson 1953; Kernaklian 1967; O’Grady 1979) corroborate the generational patterns of heritage language

proficiency decline outlined by Valdés above. Bakalian (1993: 263) observes that although “bilingualism is a part of the process of assimilation, it is only a transitory stage.” She notes that with the exception of the very old, most Armenian immigrants learn to speak English within a few years of their settlement and function effectively in the larger society, often with a pronounced accent. “Most of the second generation learn to speak Armenian in early childhood at home, but are not likely to master it. At school, however, they learn to possess English as a ‘mother tongue’” (Bakalian 1993: 263). Moreover, Bakalian observes that the chances for the third generation to speak, let alone read and write Armenian, are slim. In regards to the older Armenian community in Fresno, La Pierre found that in the 1920s, “most of the second generation cannot speak the Armenian language well and almost none of them can read it” (1930: 304 cited in Bakalian 1993: 263).

In this process of language shift over time, immigrant community members frequently function in settings of intragroup bi- or multilingualism in which a single population makes use of two or more separate languages for internal communicative purposes. The habitual language choice that individuals make in such settings is not “a random matter of momentary inclination” (Fishman 1965: 67) but often dictated by a particular socio-cultural patterning, referred to in scholarship as domain of language use. In his article “Who Speaks What Language to Whom and When?” Joshua Fishman (1965: 75) defines domain as “a socio-cultural construct abstracted from topics of communications, relationships between communicators, and locales of communication, in accord with the institutions of a society and the spheres of activity of a culture, in such a way that individual behavior and social patterns can be distinguished from each other and yet related to each other.” Controlling factors in determining domains of language choice may include reference group membership, situational style, topic, role-relations, and

social context (Fishman 1965). Moreover, the governance of domains by the various languages in multilingual immigrant communities changes during successive stages of immigrant acculturation. In initial periods of immigrant settlement, for example, English use is restricted to few domains such as the work or governmental sphere. Over time as more immigrants acquire English they frequently speak to each other in both English and the heritage language in several domains. Finally, at the other end of the spectrum, over the course of a few generations, English use usually displaces the heritage language from all but the most private or restricted domains (Fishman 1965).

In every speech community, some degree of differential functional allocation of linguistic varieties is to be expected, either between two varieties of the same language or between multiple languages (Hudson 2002). Often immigrant speech communities are not only characterized by bilingualism, but also diglossia, the functional differentiation of languages. What distinguishes diglossia from other instances of intralingual or interlingual situational alternation is the sharp complementary distribution of the two linguistic codes (Hudson 2002). Thus two or more languages can coexist in a given community, each being supported by its corresponding sources. If one set of such supports prevails in some domains, while an alternative set becomes prevalent in other domains, so that the use of one of the two languages is clearly favored and largely considered as proper for any domain, then a diglossic situation is said to exist (Ferguson 1972; Fishman 1971). Furthermore, diglossia is considered to be associated with a compartmentalization of social roles by each individual.

The compartmentalization of multiple linguistic variants has been the longtime norm for Armenians in the Diaspora as well as the homeland. As Susan Pattie (1990) describes in her comparative study of Armenians in Cyprus and London, Armenians who grow up in the Middle

East manage to compartmentalize the various languages they can communicate with. “For example, Armenian is private, it is the speech of intimacy, of informal social ties with family and close friends. For older cohorts, especially men, Turkish is used for joking, story telling, proverbs, and curses. Greek in (Cyprus) or Arabic (in Lebanon/Syria) is the language of the marketplace, of buying and selling, of haggling over prices. English and/or French are the languages of elite status, of higher education, of one’s professional training” (Bakalian 1993: 263-264). Similarly, in Nercissians’ (2001) analysis of language use patterns by ethnic minorities in Tehran, Iran, she found that in the close-knit Armenian community, Armenian is mostly used for informal face-to-face communications while Farsi is used in other domains such as the workplace. Finally, in the Republic of Armenia, particularly in the Soviet period, not only did speakers compartmentalize standard and colloquial Eastern Armenian based on social context in a situation of intralingual diglossia, but also differentially allocated the use of Russian and Armenian (see Chapter 2).

As for youth in the U.S., in his case study of the socializing processes in Ferrahian Armenian school in Encino, CA, Richard Davidian (1986) found that students tend to compartmentalize the languages they speak, depending on their interlocutors and the topic. Most recently, Hagop Kouloujian, in his presentation on the demotion of the Armenian language in the Diaspora (2012) pointed to a form of accelerated diglossia or linguistic compartmentalization, in which the life and the context of Armenian youths has quickly evolved into separate compartments based on thematic and temporal divisions. Kouloujian’s chart below effectively reflects the compartmentalization of the two languages in a heritage setting, in which Armenian functions in spheres restricted to the home (“the kitchen”), daily interactions, the familial world,



the elderly, and the past, while English marks current interests, higher education, abstract thought, and future endeavors<sup>38</sup>.

Armenian	English
Խոհանոց (հաց ու պանիր, քեպապ) Kitchen (bread and cheese, kebab)	Fast Food
Մեծ-հայր, հեռավոր ազգականներ Grandfather, distant relatives	Ընկերներ (ամօթ է հայերէն խօսիլը նոյնիսկ ամբողջովին հայախօս վեց տարեկան սղոց խումբի մը մէջ) Friends (it is shameful to speak Armenian even in a group of entirely Armenian speaking six year olds)
Հարսանիք Wedding	Սիրահարություն Falling in love
Ընտանեկան սէր Familial love	Հակառակ սեռի հետ սիրաբանություն Love making with the opposite sex
Առտնին տնտեսություն (հաց գնէ՛, «պենզին» լեցո՛ւր) Home economics (buy some bread, fill up gas)	Տնտեսական ծրագրաւորում, Քաղաքականություն, Ընկերային հարցեր, Բժշկական եւ գիտական նիւթեր, Միջազգային քաղաքականություն, եւն. Economic planning, Politics, Social issues, Medical and Scientific topics, International politics, etc.
Հայր Մեր “Our Father”	Փիլիսոփայություն, աստուածաբանություն Philosophy, theology
Խոհանոց (սորէն), շօշափելի առարկաներ Kitchen (again) Tangible objects	Վերացական մտածողություն Abstract thinking

<sup>38</sup> This is a modified version of the chart that was used in Hagop Kouloujian’s presentation at the ARPA 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference on 05/19/2012. It is included here with his permission.

Քարացած հաստատումներ Petrified statements, dogma	Քննական մտածողություն Critical thinking
Ցեղասպանությունը, թուրքը եւ մենք The Genocide, the Turk, and us	Իրաւագիտություն, օրէնսգիտություն Jurisprudence, legislation
ԱՆՑԵԱԼ PAST	ՆԵՐԿԱՅ ԵՒ ԱՊԱԳԱՅ PRESENT AND FUTURE

Figure 4.2: Compartmentalization of Armenian and English in a heritage setting (Kouloujian 2012)

The findings above correlate with Valdés’ (2001: 45) assertion that heritage speakers in the U.S. grow up in communities characterized by both bilingualism and diglossia in which “the high registers of English are used to carry out all formal/high exchanges, while heritage languages and the informal registers of English are used as the low variety appropriate primarily for casual, informal interactions.”

### Compartmentalization Based on Age

Շ: Ո՞ւմ հետ ես հայերեն խոսում:

Ա: Ըմմ նայած տարիքը մարդու, usually որ զիտեմ որեւէ մեկը հայ ա ու մի քիչ տարիքով մեծ ա, հայերեն եմ խոսում:

S: With whom do you speak Armenian?

A: Umm it depends on the age of the person, **usually** when I know that someone is Armenian and a bit older, I speak Armenian.

[A.H./ Age 19/ F / Birthplace – Yerevan, Armenia/ Age at immigration– 8]

Շ: Ո՞ւմ հետ ես հայերեն խոսում:

Լ: Ըմ մեծերի հետ, մասնավոր մեծերի հետ հայերեն եմ խոսում:

S: With whom do you speak Armenian?

L: Um with grown-ups, especially with grown-ups I speak Armenian.

[L.A. / Age 20 / F / Birthplace – Glendale, CA / Parents repatriated to Armenia from Iran]

Շ: Ո՞ւմ հետ ես հայերեն խոսում:

U: Հայ մեծահասակների հետ հայերեն եմ խոսում: Ասենք եթե ընկերոջ ծնողների հետ ծանոթանամ, անպայման հայերեն կխոսեմ (laughter):

S: With whom do you speak Armenian?

A: With Armenian elderly I speak Armenian. For example, if I am introduced to my friend's/boyfriend's parents, I will definitely speak Armenian (laughter).

[A.H. / Age 19 / F / Birthplace – Yerevan, Armenia / Age at immigration- 8]

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Շ: Ok: Ըմբ ո՞ւմ հետ ես հայերեն խոսում:

Վ: Տենց ընտանիքի անդամների հետ, ըը ավելի տենց մեծ մարդկանց հետ, տարիքով, ըը բայց իմ տարիքի մարդկանց հետ ավելի շատ անգլերեն, անգլերեն եմ խոսում:

S: Ok, um with whom do you speak Armenian?

V: Like with members of the family, uh more so with older people, people with age, uh but with people my age more English, I speak English.

[V.A. / Age 21 / M / Birthplace – Yerevan, Armenia / Age at immigration- 1]

Although the role of the interlocutor has been investigated in research on language compartmentalization, the function of the interlocutor's age has not been highlighted as thoroughly. In this study, age appears to be the most predictable and clear category leading to linguistic compartmentalization; more specifically, age has a bearing on the relationship between the interlocutors and, correspondingly, the choice of language. As the passages above demonstrate, when asked with whom they use Armenian, the respondents consistently designate age as a critical factor in their selection of language. Interactions with those who are older (մեծեր/grown-ups) are predominantly carried out in Armenian, while interactions with anyone of similar age (հասակակից/of the same age) or younger most commonly occur in English. Thus, there is a positive correlation between the advanced age of the interlocutor and increased heritage language use. Consequently, the declining age of the interlocutor positively corresponds with increased use of English.

Although the domain of the family is typically more resistant to displacement by the use of the dominant language (Fishman 1965) and most frequently associated with heritage language use, the age of family members plays a critical role. For example, in the analysis of language use patterns within the family, the language spoken with parents is overwhelmingly Armenian, while the language between siblings is almost exclusively English, quite often to the respondents' surprise during interviews. In the National Heritage Language Survey, the bulk of respondents (45.9%) used a combination of their heritage language and English or just their heritage language (39.5%) at home (Carreira & Kagan 2011). As for the Armenian cohort, 61.1% of the respondents indicated that they speak Armenian at home with their parents and family, with 32.5% using a combination of English and Armenian (Carreira et al. 2009). Unfortunately the survey combines parents and family into one question without specifying language use patterns with parents as distinguished from language use with siblings. However, extensive research on Spanish heritage speakers confirms that although "most heritage speakers speak the heritage language with their parents or some other elderly family members; the children typically use the majority language with each other, and even with siblings, regardless of the language that the parents speak" (Montrul 2011: iii; Lynch 2003).

Interactions with extended family members follow a similar formula: the language with older family members such as grandparents, aunts, and uncles is predominantly Armenian, while the language with cousins is essentially English. Once again age plays an important role in this decision making process, as use of Armenian is associated with the world of those older than the speaker. For example, although the language of interaction among cousins is typically English, if the cousin is relatively older, this triggers more Armenian use. In response to which language she uses with her cousins, the following respondent explained:

Ըրը I guess depends, like եթե ինձնից ավելի մեծ են՝ հայերեն կխոսամ, եթե իմ տարիքին են կամ ավելի փոքր՝ անգլերեն.

Uh, **I guess depends, like** if they are older than me, I'll speak Armenian, if they are my age or younger, English.

*[P.G./ Age 19/ F / Birthplace – Montebello, CA / Parents from Yerevan, Armenia]*

The association between age, language choice, and display of respect emerges as an additional factor in these investigations since employing Armenian with older speakers functions as an essential means of showing respect. Heritage speakers have difficulties envisioning speaking English to older Armenians, often labeling that as “strange” and go as far as clarifying that it is simply disrespectful to speak English to an Armenian-speaking adult. For example, this becomes very clear when looking at the following speakers’ responses regarding their language of choice with older Armenians:

Ով որ ինձ ինձանից ավել մեծ ա, դե ահագին տարիքով, ասենք թե իմ զարմիկների ծնողների հետ մենակ հայերեն եմ փորձում խոսամ: Մեկ մեկ իրանք իմ հետ են ազլերեն խոսում որը որ տարօրինակ ա:

Whoever is older than me, like a good deal older, let’s say with my cousins’ parents I only try to speak Armenian. Sometimes they speak English with me, which is strange.

*[N.V. / Age 21 / M / Birthplace – Yerevan, Armenia / Age at immigration– 1.5]*

Ըմ այո ըմ անշուշտ եթե հայկական խանութ ա աշխատողները հայ են, մեծ մասը օգտագործում եմ էդ ժամանակ որտեւ ինձ թվում ա սիրուն չի իրանց հետ անգլերեն խոսալը մեկ-մեկ ըմ yeah, լավ չի նայվում:

Um, yes, certainly, if it’s an Armenian store and the workers are Armenian, I use mostly Armenian at that time, because it seems to me that it’s not nice (acceptable) to speak English with them, sometimes um **yeah**, it’s not looked upon well.

*[S.V. / Age 21 / F / Birthplace – Yerevan, Armenia / Age at immigration– 4 months]*

As the passages above illustrate, social norms in the community demand the use of Armenian with older community members. Speakers are quite aware of these expectations, recognizing that the failure to meet them will result in social disapprobation. As one heritage speaker summarized simply, “Armenian is used with people of respect<sup>39</sup>,” and respect is intrinsically bound up with age.

Not surprisingly, the analysis of interview data indicates that English functions as the main language of interaction with similarly aged peers and friends. A majority of respondents (70.1%) to the National Heritage Language Survey indicated that they use English most of the time with their friends (Carreira & Kagan 2011). Among the Armenian respondents to the survey, 45.6% indicated English use with friends, and 48% selected a combination of English and the heritage language (Carreira et al. 2009). From the survey, it is difficult to establish precisely what the combination of the two languages signifies as it could indicate a range of code-switching patterns on a large spectrum (i.e. frequent and consistent code-switching vs. sporadic inclusion of the heritage language for effect). The interviews for this study highlight that the use of Armenian with friends is typically limited and selective. For female speakers, Armenian is mainly used to punctuate English speech with certain key words and idioms, while for male speakers it is often used to designate closeness and seriousness. Most frequently, for all speakers, Armenian is employed as a code for exchanging secrets or communicating privately in public. These gender-based and space-related tendencies will be further explored in upcoming sections.

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<sup>39</sup> This particular respondent used the non-idiomatic phrase «հարգանքների մարդիկ», literally meaning “people of respect,” indicating those people who deserve respect (i.e. elders).

Jebejian's (2010) study of the patterns of language use among Armenians of various generations in Beirut over the last 95 years reveals a similar pattern of compartmentalization based on age. For the younger generation, particularly those respondents between the ages of 18 to 24, Armenian use is mostly restricted to the home. Jebejian further details that although respondents use Armenian with their parents and other older community members, the language between siblings and friends is mainly Arabic, English, and/or French (2010). Additionally, both Davidian (1986) and Kouloujian (2012) confirm a tendency of linguistic compartmentalization among Armenian youth based on age. Davidian (1986: 260) notes that the use of Armenian among the youth at Ferrahian School in Encino, CA declines with the decreasing age of the interlocutor so that "85 percent spoke Armenian with their grandparents, 75 percent with their parents, 60 percent with their siblings, and 46 percent with their friends." Similarly, Kouloujian (2012) lists grandparents and distant relatives under the domain of Armenian, but friends under English, and indicates that "consideration has to be given to the fact that Armenian now only *looks back*, as a means to relate to older people."

Two factors must be considered in relation to tendencies of linguistic compartmentalization based on age: 1) the fact that most of the older Armenians for this cohort are Armenian dominant and 2) the strong pressure to speak English among Armenian youth. As noted in the discussion of trends of bilingualism (Valdés 2001) and governance of domains (Fishman 1965) in successive stages of immigrant acculturation, generational status plays an extremely important role in language use patterns. Although typically second and third generation immigrants are English dominant, they still use the heritage language in order to communicate with their first generation elders. Given the demographic composition of the participants in this study, the older interlocutors that speakers most frequently interact with are

predominantly first generation immigrants, and consequently, almost certainly Armenian-dominant. As a result, speaking English with Armenian-speaking adults for this cohort is often not a practical possibility due to the lack of English proficiency for most first generation immigrant community members.

Tellingly, in several cases where speakers indicated that a parent studied English in the home country or an aunt or uncle who had immigrated earlier, received higher education in the U.S., English use was more frequent. As Hinton (2001) observed in her analysis of 250 linguistic autobiographies by Asian-American immigrants, the introduction of English within the family by parents accelerates children's heritage language loss. As immigrant parents' level of proficiency in English grows, the use of the heritage language with parents decreases as a result of parents trying to help their children with English acquisition and the increased ease of communicating in English for children. Relatedly, in a focus group discussion (02/09/2013) with Armenian teachers from Prelacy schools in Los Angeles, teachers have observed a great change in the language use patterns of their incoming students over the past few decades. Unlike previous generations of students who started school as Armenian monolinguals or Armenian dominant, the newer cohorts, who are often the children of alumni, come to Armenian school already English-speaking or often English dominant, reflecting an increased use of English in the home. As such, the patterns of language use may look quite different for third and fourth generation youth, whose parents are already English proficient and/or dominant. Once the pool of English speaking older community members increases, advanced age may not play as important of a role in triggering the use of the heritage language.

The second factor to consider involves the pressure for English use among youth in immigrant communities in the U.S. Researchers across languages point to a strong societal push



toward English, which makes retaining the heritage language while growing up more difficult (Fishman 1991; Veltman 1988; Tse 2001). As noted above, respondents indicate almost exclusive use of English with siblings and peers. Although for most heritage speakers, Armenian is their first language in terms of the order of acquisition, English tends to dominate once they start school, even for those who attend Armenian day schools. Research demonstrates that proficiency in the heritage language usually declines with birth order, so that first-born children tend to develop higher levels of heritage language competence than do second and third-born children in bilingual families (Lambert & Taylor 1996; Zentella 1997, cited in Lynch 2003). Once the first-born child acquires English at school, he/she begins using it with younger siblings, thus increasing their exposure to English and establishing a tendency of English use among siblings. Wong Fillmore's (1991) nationwide interview study with more than 1,000 linguistic minority families in the U.S. reveals that children in the family are more likely to use English because of exposure to English from older siblings, who already learned English in school.

Davidian also observes a strong inclination to speak English at Armenian school, where “pressure for Armenian young people to learn English is everywhere, even among Armenian peers. In Ferrahian School, those who don't speak it are teased by those who do” (1986: 260). Teachers of Prelacy Armenian schools in Los Angeles confirm that Armenian is not the language of play or peer interaction for their students, who almost exclusively use English with each other, even during in-pair or in-group discussions in Armenian subject classes (Chahinian 2009; Karapetian 2013). In his chart on linguistic compartmentalization, under the domain of friends governed by English, Kouloujian (2012) notes that “it is shameful to speak Armenian even in a group of entirely Armenian speaking six year olds.” In sum there is great pressure for Armenian youth to speak English with siblings and peers, even in Armenian settings.

## **Gender Based Compartmentalization**

A gender-based pattern emerged during the investigation of language use, revealing a tendency of more Armenian use with and among males and more English use with and among females. In the family environment heritage speakers often indicate speaking more Armenian with fathers than mothers. This needs to be prefaced by the fact that the parents' knowledge of English, regardless of gender, strongly influences speakers' choice of language in their interactions. As noted in the section above, if parents have strong proficiency in English, then it becomes the favored language as speakers can express themselves more easily and profoundly in English. For example, although the general trend points to more Armenian with fathers, there were several cases where the father knew better English than the mother, resulting in more English use with the fathers. Or, for example, in the case of some speakers with a parent who received education in the U.S. or had gained English proficiency in his/her country of origin, the proportion of English use with that parent was typically higher.

Additionally, it needs to be emphasized that the discussion here focuses on the degree of Armenian spoken, however minute the difference may be. Responses about how much Armenian and English the speakers used with their parents were expressed in the form of percentages. The majority of speakers stated that they generally spoke Armenian with parents; however, when specifically asked about the percentage of Armenian and English used with parents, there was frequently a slight but noticeable trend for more Armenian use with fathers. The following passages from the interviews present a range of responses in which the speakers indicated a higher degree of Armenian use with fathers than with mothers.

Շ: Ըմամ օժ: Տան անդամների անունները ես նշեմ, դու ինձ ասա ում հետ որ լեզվով ես խոսում, եւ եթե երկու լեզվով էլ խոսում ես՝ հայերեն եւ անգլերեն,

տոկոսային հարաբերությունը նշիր՝ ասենք ութսուն տոկոս սա, քսան սա:  
Մորդ հետ ո՞ր լեզվով ես խոսում:

U: Ըմմ ութանասուն, ութսուն տոկոս հայերեն, քսան տոկոս անգլերեն:

Շ: Ok: Հո՞րդ հետ:

U: Իննսուն տոկոս հայերեն, տաս տոկոս անգլերեն:

S: Umm **ok**. I will indicate family members and you tell me which language you speak with whom, and if you speak both languages, Armenian and English, note the percentage, for example 80% this language, 20% that language. What language do you speak with your mother?

A: Umm eighty, 80% Armenian, 20% English.

S: **Ok**. With your father?

A: 90% Armenian, 10% English.

*[A.H. / Age 19 / F / Birthplace – Yerevan, Armenia /Age at immigration- 8]*

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Շ: Ok: Տանը, ըր ես քեզ ընտանիքի անդամներին նշեմ, դու ինձ ասա ում հետ որ լեզվով ես խոսում: Եւ եթե երկուսն էլ, հայերեն անգլերենն էլ՝ տոկոսային հարաբերությունը: Մորդ հետ ո՞ր լեզվով ես խոսում:

U: Էրկուսն էլ՝ հայերեն անգլերեն ըր **մայրիս հետ** 60% հայերեն 40% անգլերեն:

Շ: Ok: Հո՞րդ հետ:

U: 70% հայերեն, 30% անգլերեն:

S: Ok. At home, uh I will indicate family members to you, you tell me which language you speak with whom. If both, Armenian and English, [tell me] the percentages. What language do you speak with your mother?

A: Both, Armenian English, uh with my mother [*conjugated by deviating to regular i-declension class*] 60% Armenian 40% English.

S: Ok. With your father?

A: 70% Armenian, 30% English.

*[A.F. / Age19 / M / Birthplace – Burbank, CA / Father born in Armenia / Mother born in Aleppo, Syria repatriated to Armenia at age 16 before moving to U.S.]*

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Շ: Ok, մորդ հետ ո՞ր լեզվով ես խոսում:

Թ: Իննսուն տոկոս՝ հայերեն:

Շ: Ok: Ըր հորդ հետ:

Թ: Հարուր տոկոս՝ հայերեն:

S: Ok, what language do you speak with your mother?

T: 90% Armenian.

S: Ok. Uh with your father?

T: 100% Armenian.

[T.Y. / Age 21 / F / Birthplace – Yerevan, Armenia / Age at immigration– 1 year 8 months]

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Շ: Ըրը ok տանը ո՞ր լեզվով ես խոսում: Ասենք, ասենք, մեկ մեկ մտածենք, մամայի հետ, պապայի հետ, տատիկի պապիկի, քույր եղբայր, օրինակ՝ մամայիդ հետ ո՞ր լեզվով ես խոսում:

Գ: Անգլերեն՞ կամ like հայերեն՞:

Շ: Հա: Անգլերեն, հայերեն, կամ մի գուցե խառնուրդ:

Գ: Yeah, I think խառը:

Շ: Իսկ պապայի՞ հետ:

Գ: Ավելի շատ հայերեն:

S: Uhh **ok** what language do you speak at home? Let's say, let's say, let's think one by one, with your mom, dad, grandpa-grandma, sister-brother, for example, what language do you speak with your mom?

G: English or **like** Armenian?

S: Yeah. English, Armenian, or perhaps a mix.

G: **Yeah, I think** a mix.

S: And with dad?

G: More Armenian.

[G.Z. / Age19 / M / Birthplace – West Covina, CA / Parents from Yerevan, Armenia]

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Շ: Ըր մորդ հետ ո՞ր լեզվով ես խոսում:

U: Ըմ հայերեն, ամենաշատը հայերեն եւ անգլերեն:

Շ: Ըհրհ: Հորդ հե՞տ:

U: Հայերեն՝ պարտադիր:

S1: Uh what language do you speak with your mother?

S2: Um Armenian, mostly Armenian and English.

S1: Uhuh. With your father?

S2: Armenian – it's a requirement.

[S.M. / Age 20 / F / Birthplace – Yerevan, Armenia / Age at immigration– 7.5]

The tendency to employ more Armenian with fathers may have multiple causes and explanations, some of which speakers highlighted in their interviews. Several respondents noted that their fathers knew less English and spoke with heavy accents, which discouraged the

respondents from using English. Others mentioned that mothers often encouraged them to speak English at home in order to improve their own English skills. For example, in response to which language he uses with his mother, this speaker responded in the following manner:

Հա, մեկ մեկ ինքը ինձի խնդրում ա, ասում ա անգլերեն մի քիչ խոսա որ սովորեմ: Առաջ էին ասում ինձի որ հայերեն մենակ խոսա բան, որ հանկարծ չմոռանաս բան, բայց արդեն էս տարիքին էլ երեւի չես, չեմ մոռանա: Մեկ մեկ ասում ա որ անգլերենով օգնեմ բայց ը հայերեն էլի:

Yeah, sometimes she asks me, she says speak a little English so that I learn. Before they used to tell me to only speak Armenian and stuff, so you don't forget and stuff, but already at this age, you, I probably won't forget. Sometimes she asks me to help her with English, but uh mostly [I interact with her in] Armenian.

*[V.A. / Age 21 / M / Birthplace – Yerevan, Armenia / Age at immigration- 1]*

The speakers' narratives imply that mothers may be more inclined to adapt and acculturate than fathers and thus create a more flexible environment of English use at home. In contrast, fathers are less willing to acclimate, are more conservative, and more likely to enforce language policing in the home. In several cases the respondents declared that fathers were the ones instilling Armenian-only rules in the household, or constantly correcting them, and in some instances even admonishing mothers for not using “proper” Armenian. In the unique example below, a speaker conveyed his father's excessive attention to proper language use as a result of his occupation as a language teacher.

Շ: Իսկ տարբերություն կա՞ մորդ թե հորդ հետ ասենք մեկի հետ ավելի շատ անգլերեն, մեկի հետ ավելի քիչ, կամ միշտ հայերեն էս խոսում:  
Ն: Միշտ հայերեն իրենց հետ: Որոշ ասենք իդիոմներ կան բաներ կան որ անգլերեն պարզ ա կասենք, որ իրանք երկուսն էլ ... հայրս, հայրս անգլերենի դասատու է ճիշտն ասած, ընդեղ Հայաստանից, ընդեղ մոտ մի քսան տարի ավել երեւի ավել հայերեն high-school-ում էր դաս տվել, ստեղ էլ հիմա ESL ա որպէս part-time գործ տալիս: Հայերեն խոսելուց էլ թեկուզ իրա հետ ավելի ըը էն տարիքի եմ հասել արդեն որ իմ սխալները ուզում եմ բռնել մինչեւ ասենք արտահայտելը ու եթե սխալվեմ գիտեմ կճշտի ինքը, թեկուզ բառերը եթե իսկապէս պարսկական բառ է դա կամ կամ թուրքական բառ որ շատ ենք

օգտագործում ըն կճշտի էդ էդ իմաստով, էդ էդ դրա պատճառով ես ինքս ը միշտ ինձ ուղղում եմ, բայց մորս հետ ոչ էդ էդ էդ աստիճանի չի ինքը, չնայած մեկ-մեկ կբողոքի որ շատ ա հայրս բան անում, հեռուստացույց նայելուց թեկուզ որոշ ծրագիրներ որ սխալ են խոսում բան ջղայնանում ա մեկ-մեկ բայց դե ինքն էլ որ ըհ լեզվի դասատու ա էղել, դրանից ա էլի:

S: And is there a difference [in interactions] with your mother or father, let's say more English with one, less with the other, or do you always speak Armenian?

N: Always Armenian with them. There are some, let's say, idioms and things that we will obviously say in English, because they both...my father, my father is an English teacher to be honest, already in Armenia, over there he taught Armenian for over twenty years, probably more, in a **high school**, here now he teaches **ESL** as a **part-time** job. Even when speaking Armenian with him, I've reached such an age already that I want to catch my mistakes before let's say expressing myself and if I make a mistake, I know that he'll correct me, even words, if it's really a Persian word or or a Turkish word that we use a lot uh he'll correct me in that sense, for that reason I uh always correct myself, but with my mother no, she is does not go as far, although sometimes she'll complain that my father does it too much, even when watching television, when certain programs speak wrong or something he'll get upset sometimes but well 'cause he's been a language teacher, that's the reason you know.

*[N.S. / Age 22 / M / Birthplace – Gyumri, Armenia / Age at immigration– 3.5]*

This appears to be true in the respondents' interactions with grandparents as well; in a few rare cases, in which respondents reported speaking some English with grandparents, it was solely with the grandmother. For example, in response to when he feels uncomfortable speaking Armenian, the following respondent explained that he feels at ease with his grandmother because she encourages him to use English whenever his Armenian is lacking.

I mean տատիս հետ անհանգիստ չեմ զգում որտեղ ինքն էլ ա արդեն իմանում որ հայերենս էտքան լավ չի բայց ըն ինքն էլ ա ասում ա էթե չենք կարա բացատրենք հայերենով, ասում ա. «Անգլերենով ասա՛, փորձի՛, կարող ա հասկանամ»:

**I mean** I don't feel uncomfortable with my grandma 'cause she also already knows that my Armenian is not that good but uh she too says if we can't explain in Armenian, she says, "Say it in English, try, maybe I'll understand."

*[A.F. / Age 19 / M / Birthplace – Burbank, CA / Father born in Armenia / Mother born in Aleppo, Syria, repatriated to Armenia at age 16 before moving to U.S.]*

The tendency for adult female migrants to be more inclined to adapt to the host country correlates with general trends in gender and migration studies, which suggest that because women typically have fewer options in their countries of origin, they are more likely to embrace their new destinies than men (Karapetian Giorgi 2012). Studies on migration reveal that migrant women have more to gain from migration (Brettell 2009; Goodson-Lawes 1993) in comparison to migrant men, particularly for those who come from patriarchal societies. Dion and Dion (2001), in their study of gender and cultural adaptation in immigrant families note that the conditions associated with immigration and settlement in the receiving society may challenge expectations about gender-related roles, resulting in the renegotiation of these roles in immigrant families. Immigrant women, particularly those who attain comparable or higher levels of education and/or employment develop a sense of autonomy and competence which allows them to challenge traditional gender-roles from their countries of origin. Lim (1997) interviewed Korean immigrant working couples residing in the U.S. about their views concerning each spouse as wage earner and contributor to different aspects of family and domestic work. Themes that emerged from the interviews included husbands' concern with the challenge they perceived to male authority in the family given the changed family circumstances associated with gender role expectations and behavior, as illustrated by the following comment from one of the husbands interviewed:

After she started working her voice got louder than in the past. Now, she says whatever she wants to say to me. She shows a lot of self-assertion. She didn't do that in Korea. Right after I came to the U.S., I heard that Korean wives change a lot in America. Now, I clearly understand what it means. (Lim 1997: 38)

The wife of the above interviewee commented as follows:

In Korea, wives tend to obey their husbands because husbands have financial power and provide for their families. However, in the U.S., wives also work to make money as their

husbands do, so women are apt to speak out at least one time on what they previously restrained from saying. (Lim 1997: 38)

Although there is very little academic research on gender differences in adult Armenian migrants' adaptation to settling in the U.S., in the realm of artistic representation, diaspora writer Khoren Aramouni writes consistently about the conditions of Armenian immigrants in the L.A. community. In his play, *Future Without Return* (2004), Aramouni perceptively captures the renegotiation of gender roles in an immigrant family from Armenia, particularly because the mother is portrayed as earning higher wages in her white-collar job in comparison to the father's low-status and low-paying blue-collar position. The father's disgruntlement with the emasculated status of males and the increased assertiveness of women in the U.S. is entertainingly expressed in lines such as: "Does a day go by where she doesn't throw her work in my face?" (Aramouni 2004: 227) or "Has this country left any men? They won't grant them citizenship, until they castrate them" (Aramouni 2004: 223). Correspondingly, the mother confides in her daughter that "At some point I used to be scared of your father, and then he starting becoming scared of me" (Aramouni 2004: 220). When the daughter asks for the reason behind this reversal, the mother explains: "Because I earn more than he does" (Aramouni 2004: 221).

Karapetian Giorgi's (2012) dissertation stands as an exception to the dearth of knowledge on Armenian immigrants, with her focus on Armenian women's experiences with migration to the U.S. between 1990-2010. She concludes that the situation of Armenian-American women often fits the above-mentioned patterns, particularly as a result of their high education levels and desire for employment. United Nations studies reveal that Armenian women have some of the highest educational attainment, with approximately 80% of them finishing high school (UN2002). Sabagh et al.. (1989-1990) uncovered a few statistics from 1980 which show that, amongst the different pools of the Armenian migrants settled in Los Angeles, Armenian women



from the USSR were particularly well educated, with 45 percent having received four-year university degrees. Moreover, literature on migration emphasizes a tendency for immigrants to take jobs beneath their skill levels, with women as especially vulnerable to this because it enables them to escape patriarchal domination. The main reason why Armenian women migrated to the U.S. was due to lack of employment opportunities in Armenia (International Organization of Migration 2001; Yeghiazaryan, Avanesian, and Shanazaryan 2003) and although ironically, when they arrive, they do not necessarily achieve high paying positions, the desire to gain employment is very strong (Karapetian Giorgi 2012). Perhaps learning English and encouraging English use functions as part of the process of immigrant women's increased inclination to and benefit from acclimating to their new English-speaking environment. Whereas for adult immigrant males, perhaps in the process of renegotiated gender roles, exercising control on issues such as language use in the family may function as a means of retaining traditional male authority.

A similar tendency of linguistic compartmentalization based on gender emerged in the analysis of speakers' language use patterns with peers. When asked about which language speakers choose to communicate in with friends, a noticeable distinction presents itself along gender lines, showing more preference for Armenian use by males. This needs to be prefaced by the disclaimer that the dominant language among friends is undoubtedly English, both for males and females; however, for the rest of this discussion, the issue does not center so much on language choice between English and Armenian, but the agency exercised in the degree of Armenian use among friends. The overarching pattern reflects males choosing to speak more Armenian with their male friends and females almost exclusively preferring to speak English.

Male speakers reported experiencing a sense of pleasure and pride in speaking Armenian, as demonstrated in the following example.

Շ: Իսկ ընկերների՞ դ հետ, հայ ընկերներիդ իհարկե:  
Ն: Հայ ընկերներին հետ՝ հայերեն:  
Շ: Հարյո՞ւր տոկոս հայերեն:  
Ն: Հպարտանալով՝ այո: Փորձում ենք հայերեն խոսանք:

S: And with friends? Armenian friends of course.  
N: [I speak] Armenian with my Armenian friends.  
S: 100% Armenian?  
N: With pride, yes. We try to speak Armenian.

[N.V. / Age 21 / M / Birthplace – Yerevan, Armenia / Age at immigration– 1.5]

In addition to speaking more Armenian with friends, male speakers indicated that the level of intimacy or closeness with a friend correlates with increased Armenian use.

Շ: Ընդհանրապես՝ ո՞ւմ հետ ես հայերեն խոսում:  
Ն: ... որոշ մի քանի մտերիմ ընկերների հետ, ը փորձում եմ ավելի շատ հայերեն պնդել կամ օգտագործել:

S: In general, with whom do you speak Armenian?  
N: ... with some of my close friends, uh I try to insist or use more Armenian.

[N.S. / Age 22 / M / Birthplace – Gyumri, Armenia / Age at immigration– 3.5]

Շ: Ok: Իսկ ընկերներիդ հետ ո՞ր լեզվով ես խոսում, հայ ընկերների:  
Վ: Կես, կես, մեկ, նայած – հայերեն մեկ էլ անգլերեն բայց ամենամոտիկ ընկերս՝ անունը Հակոբ ա, իրա հետ ավելի շատ հայերեն քան ... իրանց եմ ասում որտեւ ամենամոտիկ ընկեր, ի իրեք մոտիկ ընկեր ունեմ, իրանց հետ տենց հայերեն:

S: Ok, which language do you speak with your friends? Armenian friends.  
V: Half, half, some, depends – Armenian and English, but my closest friend, his name is Hagop, with him more Armenian than... I mention them ‘cause my closest friend, I have three close friends, with them like I speak Armenian.

[V.A. / Age 21 / M / Birthplace – Yerevan, Armenia / Age at immigration- 1]

As evidenced in the examples above, use of Armenian marks a sense of solidarity and intimacy among friends, so that the closer they are the higher the degree of interaction in Armenian. On a few occasions male speakers also reported using Armenian among friends when discussing something serious or when they were upset. Perhaps this act of speaking Armenian in important and highly emotional situations marks a sign of adulthood for male Armenian youth, reflecting and reenacting what they have seen their Armenian-speaking fathers do in serious situations.

Interestingly, males report feeling less comfortable speaking Armenian with females due to concerns of unintentionally offending them by inadvertently saying something wrong. In the example below a male speaker describes offending someone due to his lack of proficiency, which has caused him to be wary about speaking Armenian with girls, implying that perhaps the stakes of male-female interaction are higher.

Ավելի շատ տղաների հետ, եթե հայերեն պիտի խոսամ, հայերեն եմ խոս, ավելի ասենք, չեմ ամաչի որ իրանց հետ հայերեն խոսամ, չեմ ուզում մի բան, որտեւ էդքան չեմ սովորել որ, չեմ իմանում ի՞նչն ա սխալ, ի՞նչն ա ճիշտ, ժամանակներ կա որ խոսել եմ, մի բան սխալ եմ ասել, մեկը ինձի ըը ուղղել ա, սովորեցի նոր կներես բան ասեցի, որ չէի իմանում, ու դրա համար ժամանակներ կան որ ամաչում եմ, չեմ ուզում, մի բան կարող ա մի բան սխալ ասեմ, so ավելի հանգիստ եմ զգում ասենք ըը տղաների հետ հայերեն խոսամ բացի աղջիկ:

More so with boys, if I have to speak Armenian, I speak Armenian, I won't be, let's say, as embarrassed if I speak Armenian to them, I don't want to [say] something, 'cause I haven't learned that much to, I don't know what's wrong, what's right, there are times where I have spoken, said something wrong, someone has uh corrected me, I learned and then I said sorry and stuff, I didn't know and because of that there are times when I am embarrassed, I don't want to, I may say something wrong, **so** I feel more comfortable, let's say, speaking in Armenian with boys, than girls.

*[A.F. / Age19 / M / Birthplace – Burbank, CA / Father born in Armenia / Mother born in Aleppo, Syria, repatriated to Armenia at age 16 before moving to U.S.]*

In the case of female speakers, they report almost exclusively speaking English with Armenian friends. The use of Armenian is frequently for additional effect, almost similar to

punctuating their speech with accentuating features. Speakers bring up examples such as using terms of endearment, which cannot be accurately translated, stories related to family members and matters, and when they are trying to be funny. Additionally, females, as well as males, use Armenian when sharing secrets or in situations in which they desire privacy, such as speaking on the phone. The following comments by respondents highlight some of the situations in which female speakers choose to speak Armenian.

Տենց ա ստացվում: Կան բառեր որ չենք կարող թարգմանենք: Օրինակ՝ ցավդ տանեմ կամ որ մեկը շատ համով ա, էդ ո՞նց կարող ես թարգմանել անգլերեն:

That’s how it happens. There are words that we can’t translate. For example “let me take your pain away” [*a common term of endearment originally stemming from trying to prove credibility and establish honesty and trustworthiness*] or that “someone is very tasty,” [*meaning someone is very sweet, likeable*] how can you translate that into English?

[L.S. / Age 24 / F / Birthplace – Yerevan, Armenia/ Age at immigration– 3]

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Մեկ-մեկ մի ըրըրը ընենց բաներ կա որ հայերեն ես ավելի լավ կարող բացատրես կամ ըմ մի բան որ տունում, տանն ա լինում մամայի պապայի հետ, ըտենց հայերեն պիտի պատմես: Ըմ կամ որ մեկի մասին մի բան պիտի ասես ու չես ուզում իմանա:

Sometimes a uhhh there are such things that you can explain much better in Armenian or um something that in the house [*declined without vowel reduction and incorrectly*], happens at home, with mom or dad, like you have to tell [those stories] in Armenian. Or when you have to say something about someone and you don’t want him/her to know.

[M.K. / Age 19 / F / Birthplace – New York / Family moved to L.A. when she was 3]

A brief review of research on gendered patterns of adaptation trajectories and experiences among immigrant youth may provide clues into the reasons behind the gendered patterns of language use presented above. The role of gender as an important segmenting factor in the adaptation of immigrant youth across many ethnic groups has been the focus of various studies highlighting strong differences in educational outcomes that favor girls over boys (Qin 2006;

Dion & Dion 2001; Brandon 1991; Falician & Rumbaut 2005). Qin (2006) cites the following causes behind the superior performance by immigrant girls over boys: parental expectations after migration, socialization at home, relations at school, and gendered processes of acculturation and identity formation. Ethnographic research across ethnic groups shows that immigrant parents usually place much stricter controls on their daughters than their sons (Gibson 1988; Lee 2001; Sarroub 2001; Waters 1996 cited in Qin 2006). Moreover, researchers have found that immigrant girls have more positive attitudes toward school than boys (Lee 1997, 2001; Sarroub 2001; Waters 1996 cited in Qin 2006) stemming from girls' view of school as a liberating social space and an instrumental view of education as empowerment against tradition (Qin 2006). In terms of acculturation and identity formation, studies demonstrate that the boundaries between ethnic identities appear to be less fluid and less permeable for boys than girls, as boys seem to have more difficulty in assuming bicultural competencies and making successful bicultural adjustments (Portes & Rumbaut 2001).

Although not much research exists on the relationship between gender and heritage language use, the few available studies present contradictory results. In a study of Spanish in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas, Klee (1987) highlights the relationship between socioeconomic factors, gender, and language maintenance. Klee observed that Mexican-American men tended to use significantly more Spanish in their everyday lives than did women as a result of the women's tendency to be employed in service and professional jobs where English was a requisite, while men tended to hold more jobs not requiring them to speak English. Spanish functioned, "as the language used by males to establish a kind of masculine identity and to maintain a group solidarity," while English was characterized as a more "feminine language" (1987: 133). Solé (1978) observed the same tendency among Mexican-American college students. Echoing the

finding that immigrant females have better educational outcomes, Solé suggested that this tendency may result from Mexican-American women's awareness that through assimilation to Anglo culture, for which speaking English is a prerequisite, they will have greater opportunities for socioeconomic success and personal realization regarding the limitations placed upon them by more traditional Mexican culture.

On the other hand, Zentella (1997) discovered in an ethnographic study of Puerto Ricans in New York that Spanish language use was associated more with female domains, as females tended toward higher levels of maintenance and proficiency in Spanish in comparison to males from the same neighborhood. She explained these tendencies in terms of social networks: "Girls were more likely than their brothers to be expected to do things and be with people that resulted in greater involvement with Spanish ... Boys, on the other hand, could spend much more time outside of the house and off the block, away from Spanish" (Zentella 1997: 51). Additionally, female college students enroll in much greater numbers in foreign/heritage language classrooms than their male counterparts, perhaps indicating more interest in language maintenance and proficiency. Following this trend among foreign language learners in general, the majority (64%) of respondents to the National Heritage Language survey are female (Carreira et al. 2009). As for the Armenian cohort in the survey, female respondents accounted for 71.7%, while male respondents comprised 28.3% (Carreira et al. 2009), reflecting an almost identical gender distribution of the participants in the interviews conducted for this study, which were comprised of 70.3% female and 29.6% male participants. However, increased enrollment and participation in heritage language classrooms does not necessarily indicate increased use of the heritage language with peers. Although the majority of the participants in this study were female, and many of them did indeed have higher proficiency than their male counterparts, the males still

expressed more agency in using Armenian with friends.

### **Compartmentalization of Medium of Communication**

One of the most basic but critically significant domains of compartmentalization centers on the medium of the language; more clearly put, oral vs. written language. Careful analysis of the interview data points to a strong divide, revealing a pattern in which Armenian use is mainly associated with the oral medium of communication, while English serves as the written medium, occasionally even functioning as the vehicle for Armenian writing through the Romanization of Armenian script. Several factors may contribute to this tendency, including the Armenian tradition of oral socialization into language use, the typical lack of literacy among heritage speakers and the impact of this on their access to cultural resources, the lack of availability of Armenian fonts in social media outlets, and the corresponding ubiquity of the Roman alphabet.

Although the role of literacy cannot be underestimated in the development of formal language proficiency, as Fishman (1996: 78) plainly explains, “every generation as a rule starts off illiterate and has to be made literate from ground zero.” Historically children’s socialization into language use has been governed by the oral domain, taking place in the daily interactions of the home and the community. Even though many societies have a high degree of literacy, the socialization process in the early years of children’s language development typically centers on oral proficiency, with socialization into literacy mainly perceived as the function of formal education. As a response to poverty and cultural deprivation, during the 1970s the United Nations made great efforts worldwide to educate mothers, in the belief that they in turn could bring literacy goals and skills to their own children (Heath 2010). Consequently, in the late 1970s the concept and practice of “family literacy” came into the public realm of American education, in order to engage parents as partners to promote home reading and language

development (Heath 2010). “Implicit in promotions of literacy in the home was the idea that reading together should be a core family activity, because books instilled values. Books and reading brought the literate ways of thinking that were highly prized in school into habitual practice and gave family members common ground for talking, joking, and cross-referencing observations of everyday life” (Heath 2010: 16). In many middle class American families, “caregivers direct children to attend to pictures, elicit names of objects, and label and comment on those objects during structured interactions” (Schieffelin & Ochs 1986: 181).

Biased by the mainstream American focus on literacy in the language socialization process summarized above, initially the interview questions in this study naïvely inquired about story reading traditions during speakers’ childhood years. However, what stood out in the resulting investigation was the overwhelming existence of an oral tradition that dominates the socialization process of Armenian heritage speakers. In case after case speakers responded negatively to story reading in their childhood and instead highlighted story *telling*, in addition to oral poem recitations and lullabies or folk songs being sung in the home. Speakers recalled parents and grandparents telling them children’s stories, singing to them, and teaching them short poems, which were repeated over and over again until they were memorized. Once children learned the poems, their skills were frequently put on display in the form of recitations for other members of the family and guests. Most speakers fondly remembered stories, songs, and poems from their childhood, some even citing names of certain folk heroes, titles of songs, or lines of poems from memory. The examples below reflect the range of oral activities, which heritage speakers were engaged in during childhood.

Շ: Օ՛կ. Իսկ որ փոքր էիր քեզ հայերեն գրքեր կարդացել է՞ն, հեքիաթներ պատմել է՞ն:



Ջ: Հեքիաթները՝ հա: Ըր like ես փոքրուց հեքիաթ կարող եմ, էր like poem-նե՞րը: Like «Ես իմ անուշ Հայաստանի...», բա՞ն: Էդպես բաներ կարող եմ անեմ, որտեւ սովորացրել են ու մաման, like գիշերվա like երգեր էր երգում, like սխալը ու բան (laughter), բայց չէ, չեն կարդացել:

S: Ok. And when you were little did they read Armenian books for you, tell you fairy tales?

G: Fairy tales, yes. Uh **like** from a young age I can [recite] fairy tales (*confusion between fairy tale and poem*), like those poems [*Armenian plural suffix and definite article attached to English noun poem*]? **Like** “I Love My Sweet Armenia’s...”<sup>40</sup>,” and stuff? I can do stuff like that ‘cause they taught me and mom **like** would sing **like** night-time songs, like the nightingale<sup>41</sup> and stuff (laughter), but no, they didn’t read.

[G.K. / Age 21 / F / Birthplace – Yerevan, Armenia / Age at immigration– 10 months]

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Շ: Ոտանավորներ սովորո՞ւմ էիր, արտասանո՞ւմ էիր:

Ա: Հա, անգիր: Այո: “Հայաստան ասելիս, something something...” (laughter):

S: Did you learn poems? Recite them?

A: Yeah, by heart. Yes. “When saying Armenia<sup>42</sup>,” something something...” (laughter).

[A.H. / Age 19 / F / Birthplace – Yerevan, Armenia /Age at immigration- 8]

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Շ: Ok: Իսկ երբ որ փոքր էիր քեզ համար կարդո՞ւմ էին հայերենով, ասենք հեքիաթ կարդային, պատմվածք պատմեին:

Ա: Այո, հեքիաթներ կպատմեին: Ըմ ու հեքիաթ քասեթներ կդնեին ու հեքիաթ կպատմեր, էտի քնելուց առաջ կլսեի մի քիչ, ու կքնեի, էտի ինձի կքնացներ մաքուր (laughter):

S: **Ok**. And when you were little did they read for you in Armenian? For example, would they read you fairy tales, tell stories?

A: Yes, they would tell fairy tales. Um and they would play fairy tale tapes and it would tell fairy tales, I would listen to that a little before going to sleep and I would sleep, that would put me straight to sleep (laughter).

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<sup>40</sup> This is the first line of a well-known poem by Armenian poet Yeghishe Charents.

<sup>41</sup> Referring to «Արի՛, ի՛ն սոխակ»/ “Come, My Nightingale,” a very popular Armenian lullaby.

<sup>42</sup> This is the title and beginning of the first line of a famous poem by Armenian poet Hamo Sahian.

[A.F. / Age 19 / M / Birthplace – Burbank, CA / Father born in Armenia / Mother born in Aleppo, Syria repatriated to Armenia at age 16 before moving to U.S.]

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Շ: Իսկ ե՞րբ երգել են ձեր համար փոքր ժամանակ:

Է: Ըմմ մաման տունում հիշում եմ մե քիչ երգում էր, **but like** շատ փոքր ժամանակ, հետո որ փոքր եղբայրս որ **you know baby** էր իրան էլ էր երգում: Հետո պապիկս շատ **like he’s like very poetic**, միշտ սենց **random like he would just say a poem, so yeah**:

Շ: Իսկ դու բանաստեղծություններ գիտեի՞ր, արտասանո՞ւմ էիր փոքր ժամանակ:

Է: Փոքր ժամանակ անում իմ, բայց հիմա...

Շ: Մոռացե՞լ ես:

Է: Էլ չեմ հիշում, **yeah**: Մոռացել եմ:

S: And did they sing songs for you guys when you were little?

E: Umm I remember my mom would sing a little at home [*non-standard declension, typical feature of Iranian-Armenian dialect*], **but like** when we were very little, and then when my little brother, **you know** was a **baby**, she would sing to him too. And then my grandpa was **like** very **he’s like very poetic**, he would always like **random like he would just say a poem, so yeah**.

S: And did you know poems? Did you recite them when you were young?

E: When I was little I would do it [*non-standard conjugation of auxiliary verb “to be” in the past imperfect, typical feature of Iranian-Armenian dialect*], but now...

S: You’ve forgotten?

E: I don’t remember any more, **yeah**. I’ve forgotten.

[E.M. / Age 20 / F / Birthplace – Glendale, CA / Parents from Tehran, Iran]

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Տենց ոտանավորներ, բոլորը որ նայում եմ, հին տենց ըմ վիդեոներ ա բոլորը, շատ լավ ոտանավորներ գիտեի, բայց բոլորը մոռացել եմ: Հիմա որ հետ եմ նայում, ասում եմ եղբան ո՞նց եմ իմացել:

Poems like that. When I watch all the old videos like that, I knew very good poems, but I’ve forgotten them all. Now that I look back, I wonder how did I know so much?

[A.K. / Age 19 / F / Birthplace – Abovian, Armenia / Age at immigration– 6 / Parents repatriated from Iran to Armenia]

For the participants who spent their early childhood in Armenia, a similar pattern of oral socialization into language use emerged, reflecting a general Armenian convention of oral

acculturation. Particularly during the Soviet period, the realm of formal education, including socialization into literacy, was completely centralized and state controlled, without any need or room for parental involvement. As of a 2001 estimate by the CIA World Factbook, Armenia boasts an incredibly high literacy rate, with 99.6% of the population age 15 and over being able to read and write. Therefore, the need to alter the traditional system of oral socialization has not presented itself. Furthermore, Armenian publishing, both in the Republic and in the Diaspora, is less commercial and not developed in the area of pre-school age children's books. This situation is compounded in the Diaspora by the range of difficulties in obtaining children's print materials (availability, sophistication access, cost, effort, desire etc.).

In addition to an oral tradition of language socialization, which favors verbal transmission, most Armenian youth in this community predictably lack access to a formal Armenian education, which could help fill the literacy gap. For example, all of the Armenian private day schools combined together (including Prelacy and non-prelacy schools in Southern California) as well as the immersion programs in Glendale serve less than 5% of the Armenian student population (Peroomian 2006; Karapetian 2013; Kouloujian 2014). The multiple Task Forces now active in enhancing Armenian language use and instruction in the Los Angeles community all acknowledge that even the small proportion of youth who do have access to formal Armenian education, do not achieve very high rates of competence and literacy. For the few speakers in this study who had experience with some kind of Armenian instruction, either informally at home by a grandparent/parent or in a formal academic environment, these were described by respondents as "failed" attempts due to lacking effort on behalf of the speakers, lacking time, and/or the strict and undesirable environment of Armenian schools.

Outside of schooling attempts and daily interactions in the home, another form of exposure heritage speakers have to Armenian involves the cultural elements surrounding them, which can serve as useful sources of authentic linguistic input. A similar pattern of compartmentalization based on a division between the oral and written domain emerged in the realm of cultural activities as well. Even though the heritage language speakers in this study were not very active consumers of Armenian culture, the limited activities in which they did passively engage were almost entirely restricted to the oral domain. The two major cultural activities involved listening to Armenian music and watching Armenian television. In the case of Armenian music, students reported listening as a result of circumstance, for example when a parent would play it in the car or during Armenian events such as weddings, engagements, and other get-togethers. As for Armenian television, many speakers explained that they watched as a way to spend time with their parents. The programs most frequently cited by speakers included Armenian soap operas, reality shows (often based on American originals), and comedies, all of which employ colloquial Armenian, thus making them more accessible. Indeed, the Armenian responses to the National Heritage Language Survey confirm that the heritage language related activities in which students engage most frequently are limited to the oral domain, with watching TV (85.6%), listening to music (88.8%), and speaking on the phone (88.8%) receiving the highest marks (Carreira et al. 2009).

Literacy based activities such as reading and writing outside of the classroom, although described as highly desired by many respondents, were almost non-existent for most participants. Although an oral socialization process dominates in Armenian child rearing practices, a historic reverence for books and letters persists both in the Republic and in the Diaspora (Bakalian 1993). Speakers recall growing up surrounded by the books that their families brought with them from

Armenia or the parents' country of origin as their most valued possessions. Classics of the Armenian canon are displayed with great pride and honor in the Armenian home, reflecting a tradition of veneration and respect for the written word. Many respondents with some literacy shared accounts of multiple attempts at accessing these books or the newspapers laying around the home; however, their slow pace and limited competence made the task daunting and impossible, often leading to stopping after a few sentences or annoyance at only having finished a single page after hours of work.

Այո: Այո, պապաս երկար գրադարան ունի: Մտղ encyclopedia-ներ բաներ, բայց հիմա հըը I mean կարդալս ըը դանդաղ հիմա so եթե փորձեմ մի էջի վրա, սաղ օրը մի էջի վրա պիտի..փորձեմ կարդամ so հըը ժամանակ ա պետք մինչեւ որ էս էս level-ը հասնեմ:

Yes. Yes, my dad has a long [*means wall-to-wall*] library. All the **encyclopedias** [*Armenian plural marker attached directly to English noun*] and the like, but for now, **I mean**, my reading is slow now, **so** if I try, on one page, the whole day [I] will [be] on one page...I try to read, **so** for now time is needed until I can get to that **level**.

[*A.F. / Age19 / M / Birthplace – Burbank, CA / Father born in Armenia / Mother born in Aleppo, Syria, repatriated to Armenia at age 16 before moving to U.S.*]

Almost all of the speakers reported a strong desire to improve their reading skills in order to gain access to Armenian classics, precisely the books surrounding the walls in their homes that were viewed with reverence by their elders. Yet many respondents revealed feelings of guilt and worry about their lacking literacy and subsequent inability to read these prized gems.

The results of the National Heritage Language Survey corroborate a general tendency of compartmentalization among heritage speakers/learners that centers on the medium of the language, with the heritage language constrained to the oral domain and English prevalent in the written domain. Respondents self-assessed their oral skills in their heritage language as significantly stronger than their literacy skills (Carreira & Kagan 2011). As a result, heritage

language use was primarily restricted to the oral/aural domains (e.g. talking on the phone, listening to music, watching a movie) (Carreira & Kagan 2011). “Notably, half never read in their HL or spent fewer than 15 minutes per week reading in this language outside of class. By contrast, the bulk of respondents spent more than 2 hours reading in English outside of class” (Carreira & Kagan 2011: 45).

Finally, with the growing dominance of social networks, the use of Armenian has encountered a new challenge. Currently the most prevalent ways of communication, such as emails and texts, as well as social outlets like Facebook, Twitter, and blogging, blend oral and written media, blurring the lines between the formal written world and the informal spoken sphere. As expected, most of the heritage speakers interviewed reported using English when utilizing any of these social outlets. In the Armenian responses to the National Heritage Language Survey, an overwhelming majority of respondents reported never (50.8%) or rarely (36.3%) accessing the Internet in their heritage language (Carreira et al. 2009), reflecting the general trend among all of the respondents to the survey (Carreira et al. 2009; Carreira & Kagan 2011). As Kouloujian (2012: 2) observes, electronic communications are mostly held in English, even with people whose everyday language is Armenian. “It is either ‘spelling shame’ or, again, the perception that Armenian does not match the convenience of English.” In the case of users who do indeed decide to write, comment, text, and post in Armenian, they mainly use Romanized transliteration.

The following are some of the reasons for the overwhelming use of Romanized Armenian. Many heritage speakers predictably do not have literacy skills in Armenian in order to use Armenian during electronic communications. For those who do, many do not have the desire or patience to download, install, and use an Armenian font, which may be time-consuming and

requires an adjustment and learning period. In the case of texting, one of the most popular smart phones, the i-phone, does not support an internal Armenian font. Users need to download an app to text in Armenian, requiring additional time and effort to do so in a system of communication dependent on instantaneous responses. Additionally, due to the existence of two orthographies for Eastern Armenian, heritage speakers, who already lack confidence in their limited proficiency, fear making spelling errors. Thus many participants reported that they use English transliteration in order to text/post in Armenian, a very common phenomenon not only in the Diaspora, but in Armenia as well. Linguists, language activists, and concerned speakers are currently involved in heated debates about the use and impact of Romanized Armenian in social media, with many public campaigns discouraging it (Lessons in the Mother Tongue, 2014).

### **Spatial Compartmentalization**

Շ: OK. Որտե՞ղ եւ ո՞ւմ հետ ես հայերէն խոսում ընդհանրապէս:

Ջ: Ըմմ որտե՞ղ՝ տունը ամենաշատը, ըմմ ո՞ւմ հետ՝ մեծերի հետ ըմմ ու ըստեղ դպրոցում որ հմի հայ ընկերներ ունեմ, sometimes եթե ուզում ենք դասարանի մեջ հայերէն կխոսանք իրար հետ եթե փորձում ենք բան ասենք, but obviously չեմ սիրում դա անեմ because rude եմ զգում ‘cause like չեն հասկանում ինչ ենք բլբլում:

Շ: Ok: Իսկ որտե՞ղ եւ ո՞ւմ հետ ես անգլերէն խոսում:

Ջ: Անգլերէն սաղ ընկերներիս հետ basically cause everyone’s non-Armenian practically: Ըը ու ամեն տեղ՝ դպրոցում, երբ որ we go out, everywhere...

S: **Ok.** Where and with whom do you generally speak Armenian?

G: Umm, where? At home, the most. Umm, with whom? With older people umm and here at school now that I have Armenian friends, **sometimes** in class if we want to say something we’ll speak Armenian with each other, if we are trying to say something [privately], **but obviously** I don’t like doing that **because** I feel **rude** ‘cause like they don’t understand what we are babbling.

S: **Ok.** And where and with whom do you speak English?

G: [I speak] English with all my friends **basically** ‘cause everyone’s non-Armenian **practically**. Uh and everywhere, at school, when **we go out, everywhere...**

*[G.K. / Age 21 / F / Birthplace – Yerevan, Armenia / Age at immigration– 10 months]*

Շ: Ok: Որտե՞ղ եւ ո՞ւմ հետ ես հայերէն խոսում:

Ա: Տանը՝ ծնողներիս հետ անպայման հայերէն միշտ: Ը եղբորս հետ՝ խառը: Երեւի թէ որ ծնողներս ներկա են լինում, ավելի շատ հայերէն:

Շ: Ok: Որտե՞ղ եւ ո՞ւմ հետ ես անգլերէն խոսում:

Ա: Տնից դուրս:

S: Ok. Where and with whom do you speak Armenian?

A: At home, with my parents, [I speak] Armenian absolutely, always. Uh with my brother, a mix. Probably when my parents are present, [I speak] more Armenian.

S: Ok. Where and with whom do you speak English?

A: Outside of the home.

[A.K. / Age 20 / F / Birthplace – Yerevan, Armenia / Age at immigration- 3]

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Շ: Ok: Որտե՞ղ եւ ո՞ւմ հետ ես հայերէն խոսում:

Ա: Ըմ որտե՞ղ... տանն եմ հայերէն խոսում, հայերէնի դասարանում եմ հայերէն խոսում, փորձում եմ, ըմ ընկերներիս հետ, էդ ժամանակ:

Շ: Ok: Որտե՞ղ եւ ո՞ւմ հետ ես անգլերէն խոսում:

Ա: Դպրոցում եմ անգլերէն խոսում, դասարանցիների հետ, ուսուցիչների հետ, ըմ տանը երբեմնե ախպորս հետ, եւ ընկերներիս հետ:

S: Ok. Where and with whom do you speak Armenian?

M: Um where? ... I speak Armenian at home, in Armenian class I speak Armenian, I try, um with friends, at that time.

S: Ok. Where and with whom do you speak English?

M: I speak English at school, with classmates, with teachers, um at home sometimes with my brother, and with my friends.

[M.T. / Age 20 / F / Birthplace – Yerevan, Armenia / Age at immigration– 12]

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Շ: Որտե՞ղ եւ ո՞ւմ հետ ես հայերէն խոսում:

Լ: Մամայիս պապայիս հետ հայերէն եմ խոսում տան մեջ: Ընկերուհիներիս հետ հայերէն եմ խոսում ըմ երբ որ like we're in an Armenian environment:

S: Where and with whom do you speak Armenian?

L: With my mom and dad I speak Armenian at home. I speak Armenian with my friends um when **like we're in an Armenian environment**.

[L.A. / Age 20 / F / Birthplace – Glendale, CA / Parents repatriated to Armenia from Iran]

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Շ: Ըմ ok ընդհանրապես որտե՞ղ ես եւ ո՞ւմ հետ ես հայերէն խոսում:

Մ: Առաջ շատ էինք գնում Հայաստան մամայիս հետ, ամեն ամառ, բայց հետո ըմ so որ Հայաստան էի գնում էդ վախտ հայերէնս ավելի էր բացվում որովհետեւ պիտի կարդամ գրեմ, ոչ մեկ անգլերէն չգիտէն էդքան լավ so ըտենց ավելի լավ էր հայերէնս բայց հետո սկսեցինք չգնալ...Եւ ընտանիքի հետ պիտի հայերէն խոսամ որ տենց հայկական հարսանիք ենք գնում կամ ըտենց մի բան: Ըմ yeah. Usually որ ընտանիքի հետ մի բան կապ ունի, էդ վախտ ա հայերէնը:

Շ: Ըմ որտե՞ղ եւ ո՞ւմ հետ ես անգլերէն խոսում:

Մ: Բոլորի հետ:

Շ: Ok:

Մ: Անգլերէնը ... միջազգային լեզու է:

S: Um **ok**, in general, where and with whom do you speak Armenian?

M: Before we used to go to Armenia with my mom a lot, every summer, but then umm so when I would go to Armenia, at that time my Armenian would open up because I have to read and write, no one knows English that much **so** in that way my Armenian was better but then we started not going... And I have to speak Armenian with family like when we go to an Armenian wedding or something like that. Um **yeah. Usually** when it has to do with the family, that's when it's Armenian.

S: Umm where and with whom do you speak English?

M: With everyone.

S: **Ok.**

M: English...is an international language.

*[M.K. / Age 19 / F / Birthplace – New York / Family moved to L.A. when she was 3]*

As the selections above underscore, a final division of language use revolves around spatial compartmentalization, highlighting the role of both the physical location of interactions as well as the metaphoric separation of space into public/social and private/personal domains. The first and most critical division presents itself in the “at home vs. outside” dichotomy, in which Armenian use is restricted to the confines of the home whereas English use enjoys much wider reign. Predictably, both in the Armenian responses to the National Heritage Language Survey (Carreira et al. 2009) and in the interviews conducted for this study, respondents reported speaking the most Armenian “at home.” Outside of the restricted and intimate environment of the home, Armenian use frequently becomes associated with “*Armenian*” spaces and

environments such as Armenian class, Armenian weddings, baptisms, church events, social gatherings, Armenian stores, Armenian relatives' homes, in Armenia, etc. Repeatedly, the adjective “*Armenian*” appears in the descriptions of spaces appropriate for Armenian use marking and limiting the range of this linguistic medium. In opposition, English use is linked to life outside of the home, frequently with interactions related to the academic and professional world, such as lectures and discussions in classes, conversations with classmates and professors, interviews for jobs, internships, graduate school, etc.

On a more metaphoric interpretation of space, another layer of compartmentalization emerges in the division of the personal and public domains. Armenian use is associated with the more personal, familial, and intimate world, while English use functions as the most appropriate language for the public sphere. Conversations with family members, close friends, elders who require displays of respect, and the sharing of private secrets are all conducted in Armenian, while “social situations” are solely designated for English. One of the respondents aptly described her division of language use, with Armenian selected for “personal” conversations and English employed for “social” situations.

Ըմ ավելի social situation-ների մեջ անգլերեն եմ խոսում, բայց եթե ըմ ավելի personal conversation ա ընկերուհիներիս հետ, հայերեն կլինի կամ եթե չես ուզում մարդ հասկանա ինչ ես ասում, հայերեն կխոսեմ:

I speak English in more **social situations** [*Armenian plural suffix and genitive case marker with postposition “in” directly attached to English noun “situation”*], but if it’s a more **personal conversation** with friends, it will be in Armenian or if you don’t want anyone to understand what you are saying, I will speak Armenian.

[A.H./ Age 19/ F / Birthplace – Yerevan, Armenia/ Age at immigration– 8]

A majority of speakers confirmed that they use Armenian as a secret language between friends or family members. Speakers use it when gossiping, sharing secrets, talking about

surprises, or speaking on the phone with family members because speaking Armenian guarantees their privacy. The following selections demonstrate the range of situations in which speakers make use of Armenian as a secret language.

Mainly անգլերեն, բայց հայերեն էլ կխոսամ, like եթե հեռախոսով եմ խոսում ու չեմ ուզում մարդիկ լսեն (laughter):

**Mainly** [I speak] English, but I will speak Armenian too, **like** if I am on the phone and I don't want people to listen (laughter).

*[G.K. / Age 21 / F / Birthplace – Yerevan, Armenia / Age at immigration– 10 months]*

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Ծնողներիս հետ անընդհատ հայերեն եմ խոսում թե՛լեֆոնով որ եսիմ չեմ ուզում մեկը լսի ինչ որ, ինչ որ մի բանի մասին:

I always speak Armenian with my parents on the phone when, I don't know, when I don't want someone to listen to something, about something.

*[A.F. / Age 19 / M / Birthplace – Burbank, CA / Father born in Armenia / Mother born in Aleppo, Syria, repatriated to Armenia at age 16 before moving to U.S.]*

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Շ: Իսկ ընկերների հետ, ո՞ր լեզվով ես խոսում:

Գ: Ընկերների հետ ավելի շատ հայերեն: Որտե՛ս չենք ուզում է՛ն մյուսները, ուրիշները իմանան ինչ ենք խոսում (laughter):

S: And with friends, what language do you speak?

G: More Armenian with friends. 'Cause we don't want those others, the others to know what we're saying (laughter).

*[G.Z. / Age 19 / M / Birthplace – West Covina, CA / Parents from Yerevan, Armenia]*

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Շ: Ընկերների հետ ե՞րբ ես հայերեն խոսում:

Մ: ... Ըմ կամ որ մեկի մասին մի բան պիտի ասես ու չես ուզում իմանա (laughter):

S: When do you use Armenian with friends?

M: ... Um or when you have to say something about someone and you don't want him/her to know (laughter).

[M.K. / Age 19 / F / Birthplace – New York / Family moved to L.A. when she was 3]

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Շ: Որտե՞ղ եւ ո՞ւմ հետ ես հայերէն խոսում:

Թ: Ըր տան մեջ եմ հայերէն խոսում, ընկերուհիների հետ հայերէն ենք խո, հատկապէս խոսում երբ որ օտարներ են մեր կողքերը եւ մի բան կա որ կամ surprise ա լինելու կամ ը մի բան ա լինում որ ուզում ենք խուսափենք կամ միջնորդենք, ըր մեր ըր secret language-ն ա:

S: Where and with whom do you speak Armenian?

T: Uh at home I speak Armenian, with friends we sp..., we particularly speak [Armenian] when there are foreigners/non-Armenians around us and there's something that's either going to be a **surprise** or a something that's happening that we want to avoid or mediate, uh it's our uh **secret language** [*Armenian definite article directly attached to English noun "language"*].

[T.Y. / Age 21 / F / Birthplace – Yerevan, Armenia / Age at immigration– 1 year 8 months]

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Ըրմ ... depends on the situation ... so աւենք էթե I don't know ... էթե իրար հետ մի տեղ ենք որ սաղ օտարներ են, հայերէն կխոսանք իրար հետ որ ոչ մէկը չհասկանա:

Umm ... **depends on the situation** ... so let's say if **I don't know** ... if we are somewhere together where there are all foreigners/non-Armenians, we'll speak Armenian to each other so that no one will understand.

[A.F. / Age 19 / M / Birthplace – Burbank, CA / Father born in Armenia / Mother born in Aleppo, Syria, repatriated to Armenia at age 16 before moving to U.S.]

Bakalian (1993) confirms the limited role of Armenian in the second generation and beyond for the relatively few who still retain some proficiency as “relegated to sporadic episodes such as its use in church, with grandparents, or exchanging ‘secrets’ in public as a code system” (266). Vaux (1999: 6) lists *privacy* as one of the advantages of retaining Armenian use in the community he studied, explaining that “the relative obscurity of Armenian means that one can speak fairly freely in open places without concern for being overheard and understood.”

Turning now to literature on this topic, although the term “spatial compartmentalization” may not have been employed, the separation of language use based on the domain of space has been frequently observed. Fishman (1965: 69) clearly articulates, “location, setting or other environmental factors” as well as the “physical setting” as regulating factors in language choice. Additionally, researchers corroborate the confinement of the heritage language to “the context of the home” (Carreira & Kagan 2011; Kouloujian 2012; Jebejian 2010; Bakalian 1993) and its restricted use in “private sphere interactions” (Valdés 2001: 46), while English becomes the dominant language for most social interactions (Lynch 2003; Kouloujian 2012; Bakalian 1993; Aparicio 2000).

An elaborate and in-depth discussion of the causes and consequences of such a strict division of language use that restricts the heritage language to the home and private sphere can be found in Aparicio’s (2000) article “Of Spanish Dispossessed.” Aparicio describes the “domestication” of Spanish as a “language fit only for family life, undermined as a public language” (250). He depicts a U.S. ideology in regard to the monolingualism versus bilingualism debate, which tolerates “foreign” languages as long as they remain “domesticated in the private sphere of the home, the family, and the neighborhood” (252). Moreover, he cites the work of Rosina Lippi-Green (1997) who contends that debates about linguistic ‘appropriacy’ perpetuate the subordination of minority languages, with a “division between public and private languages” that designates standard English “as the only acceptable register for public use” (252). Lippi-Green continues with the claim that the dominant message regarding this issue is the following: “appreciate and respect the language of peripheral communities, but keep them in their place (109)” (cited in Aparicio 2000: 252).

Echoing Aparicio’s ideas of the heritage language as “domesticated,” the presentation of Armenian heritage speakers’ language use patterns in relation to spatial compartmentalization demonstrates that Armenian is mostly confined to the boundaries of the home, clearly marked “Armenian” spaces, and the private world of intimate encounters and sharing secrets. As one of the speakers highlighted in the first quote from this section, she feels uncomfortable speaking Armenian in a public, non-Armenian setting such as a classroom because it is considered “rude.” In opposition to the restricted spatial capacity for the heritage language, English use is widely acceptable and even elevated, not only in its ability to be used in the unlimited space outside the home, but in some cases enhanced by the discourse of English as an international language (Pennycook 1994), as cited in M.K.’s comment on page 39 in which she explains that she can use English with everyone, and supplements with the fact that “English... is an international language.”

## Conclusion

Որտեւ ըմ իմ կարծիքով իմ I mean ուզում եմ որ ծնողներիս հետ ըն ըտեւնց ըն կարեւոր մասերին խոսամ [կարևոր բաների մասին խոսեմ], մենակ էսօր էսօրվա ճաշը ինչ ա կամ էլ Արմեն կարաս ամանները դնես, կամ էլ լվացքը անես, ըտեւնց, չեմ ուզում մենակ ըտեղ հայերենս վերջանա: Ուզում եմ ավելի բարձր, ավելի professional բաներ, ուզում եմ էդ էդ էդ level-ը հասնեմ որ կարողանամ ըտեւնց conversation-ները, I can hold hold those type of conversations in Armenian too.

‘Cause, um in my opinion, my, **I mean**, I want to speak uh about those kinds of uh important things with my parents, not only about today, what’s for lunch today or Armen can you set the plates or do the laundry, like that, I don’t want my Armenian to end there. I want higher, more **professional** things, I want to get to that that that **level** so that I can have those kinds of **conversations** [plural suffix added in Armenian], **I can hold those types of conversations in Armenian too.**

[A.F. / Age19 / M / Birthplace – Burbank, CA / Father born in Armenia / Mother born in Aleppo, Syria, repatriated to Armenia at age 16 before moving to U.S.]

The composite picture in the analysis of language use patterns of Armenian heritage speakers reveals a compartmentalization of Armenian and English use into various domains, in which Armenian as the heritage language typically functions in limited and confined domains, while English use inevitably spreads over time and space. In an environment of such pressure and preference for the overwhelming use of the dominant language, especially by youth, many scholars recognize that in order to help develop heritage language use, speakers need to be provided with an increased number of domains in which they can use the language. “When the use of the language is restricted to interactions with family and friends, the terminology is constrained to topics related to these situations. In areas such as work or school, where bilingual speakers only use English, the mental lexicon may either never have been acquired or may have attrited” (Mrak 2011: 164).

Kouloujian further develops the consequences of linguistic compartmentalization for Armenian heritage speakers in which Armenian becomes associated with situations of the past and becomes a language “*for the past*” (2014: 4). “Second or third generation speakers have not seen the living language their parents experienced” and often cannot envision speaking “on subjects seen in comic books, general education, curiosities, science-fiction and others” (2014: 4) This situation is compounded by the fact that the availability of resources and responses to new domains and media are meager in Armenian (Kouloujian 2014) both in the homeland and in the Diaspora, especially in comparison to the abundance of resources available for English. In sum, the emerging picture portrays a perspective of Armenian as a limited language appropriate only for use in relation to the Armenian world, particularly as it relates to the past, and English as the full and real language of the present and future.

## CHAPTER 5

### TEASING, CRITICISM, ERROR CORRECTION, AND FEAR OF JUDGMENT: A

#### DESTRUCTIVE CYCLE

“Excruciating. That’s a rough description of what should be a pleasant adventure of discovering the wondrous essence of your being. Or: this is supposed to be fun, not painful. But it is. It is painful when you are trying to eke out words in Armenian, torturing yourself so foreign verbiage doesn’t invade your speech lest you become complicit in perverting the language you are struggling to maintain, and, alas, your fellow interlocutor is more concerned with highlighting your inadequate fluency and, naturally, their superior usage ability – their impeccable reprimands infused with “ishteh” and “yani” – than with acting as a guide toward the realization of, ostensibly, both your goal. The concluding recommendation being, “you can say it in English” or, if especially audacious, switching languages on you without notice, thus surreptitiously opining about the (inferior) quality of your spoken work.

This proclamation from the same person who is likely a steadfast source of the righteous imposition that “bedk’eh khose(e)nk Hayeren” (“we must speak Armenian”)! Imagine the state of your brain as it is trying to compute someone telling you that you must speak Armenian while telling you that if you can’t manage – and it’s obvious you can’t – just switch to the other language that they, since they’re more multilingual than you, can understand just as well. Instances like these may very well be the beginnings of bipolarity.”

-William Bairamian, “Khoseenk Hayeren, Or You Can Say it in English,” *Haytoug Magazine*<sup>43</sup>, June 18, 2012

#### Introduction

Due to the limited and restricted spheres of linguistic exposure in the heritage language as described in the previous chapter on compartmentalization, proficiency in the heritage language is difficult to fully develop and maintain. As a result, heritage speakers’ ability in their family language often remains stunted and noticeably weaker (see Chapter 3 on Linguistic Features) than their dominant language. Constant teasing, ridicule, error correction, and criticism by more proficient speakers in the family and the wider HL community lead to internalized feelings of

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<sup>43</sup> *Haytoug* is the official publication of the Western Region of the Armenian Youth Federation, serving as “a medium for Armenian American youth to voice their opinions about a wide variety of issues” (<http://www.haytoug.org/mission>).



incompetence, shame, and fear of judgment when speaking the heritage language. This chapter will explore the persistent anxiety connected with using the heritage language and the destructive cycle it generates: teasing and ridicule create a fear of judgment that leads to less interaction in the heritage language, particularly with more competent speakers; reduced interaction means less comprehensible input (defined in following section) and therefore, less opportunity to develop the heritage language. The graphic representation below demonstrates how the elements in this vicious cycle perpetuate an inability to further develop proficiency in the heritage language.

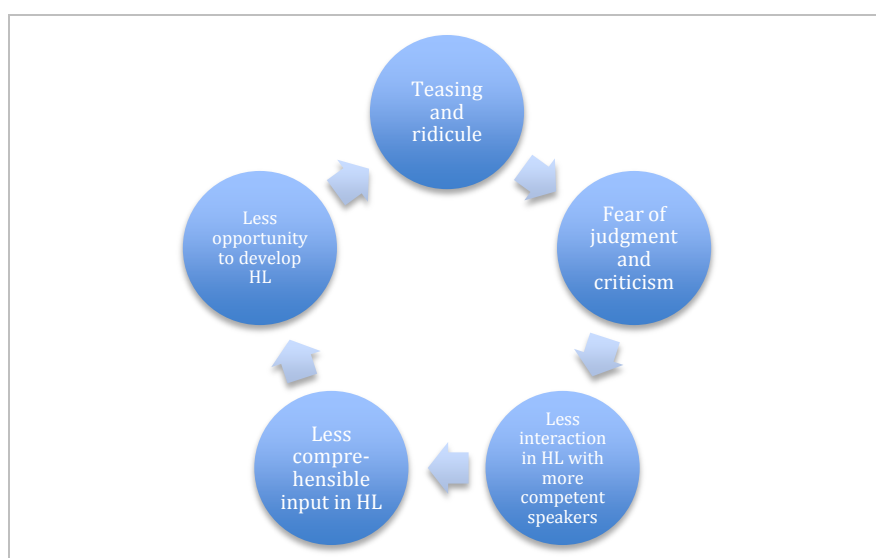


Figure 5.1: Vicious cycle that perpetuates an inability to develop proficiency in the heritage language

The social contexts of the interactions during which heritage speakers experience the debilitating anxiety described in this chapter must be considered and explained. Clearly the home, and to a lesser degree, the HL community, are where heritage speakers learn and most frequently use the heritage language; therefore, it may seem contradictory for them to feel uncomfortable in the same settings in which they first acquired and most commonly employ the language. However, it is not the physical setting at play here, but rather the social context that carries the additional stress and anxiety, which shapes the interactions. Linguistic exchanges in the heritage language that take place in the home are typically informal in nature, brief (in

passing), and predictably repetitive. Additionally, although parents usually communicate with their children in the heritage language, heritage speakers regularly code-switch in their responses and parents eventually get accustomed to the speaking patterns and trends of their bilingual children, even if they disapprove or view these as undesirable. Difficulties surface when speakers are expected to perform in a formal social context, both in the home environment and in the HL community, with older and/or unfamiliar people, who are often monolingual and/or highly competent Armenian speakers. In the case of first generation immigrants from Armenia for example, many have received tertiary education in the homeland and thus possess not only extremely high proficiency, but also the social competence and expectation to control the various registers of Eastern Armenian.

Moreover, as demonstrated in Chapter 4 on Language Use Patterns and Compartmentalization, in the Armenian environment age demands respect, and respect is equated with speaking Armenian. Therefore, when older relatives or guests come to visit, for example, or when heritage speakers interact with community members outside of the family, such as parents of friends, Armenian-speaking professionals and elders, the social context drastically changes. In these situations heritage speakers are required, and feel that they are expected to employ *proper* Armenian, which entails such features as higher registers, a wider lexicon, and formal forms of address. In addition to the elevated use of language, the interactions they are engaged in sometimes demand lengthy, drawn out responses, during which code switching and/or lapsing into the informal vernacular may be stigmatized and criticized. The recurrent feelings of embarrassment, intimidation, and internalized sense of inability that stem from interactions in the social contexts described above serve as the core source of the destructive cycle presented in this chapter.

## Conceptual Framework

The persistent and adverse criticism of U.S. heritage speakers, especially by monolingual immigrants has been confirmed in research on Spanish in the U.S. (Mrak 2011; Carreira 2000; Galindo 1995; Aparicio 2000). Carreira (2000: 426) notes that the “derisive attitudes about U.S. Spanish ... represent a particularly serious obstacle to the goal of enhancing students’ linguistic self-esteem,” which is critical in the process of language development and the formation of positive language attitudes. A review of the detrimental effects such attitudes have on Hispanic bilinguals reveals that “relatives, classmates, and even teachers, all contribute in varying degrees to the linguistic inferiority that assails many Hispanic bilinguals” (Carreira 2000: 426), leading to the firm conviction that their Spanish is faulty and in need of remediation. Often newly arrived immigrants will comment on the unexpected contact phenomena employed by heritage speakers contributing to a negative image of the U.S. language variety (Mrak 2011). Aparicio (2000) describes specific cases of speakers of U.S. Spanish being embarrassed or intimidated by monolingual speakers. Elias-Olivares’ data provides examples of older, first generation family members who disapprove of the code switching and Caló (an argot or slang of Mexican Spanish) used by younger family members (cited in Galindo 1995: 80). For U.S. Hispanics, “standard Spanish represents an unattainable goal, while U.S. Spanish remains an undesirable reality” (Carreira 2000: 424). Paradoxically, U.S. Hispanics are criticized for both speaking Spanish and for not speaking Spanish (Garcia Bedolla 2003).

The results of the National Heritage Language Survey, particularly the 121/122<sup>44</sup> Armenian responses also help shed some light on this phenomenon. Although the 1,732

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<sup>44</sup> Although 129 Armenian responses were counted in total, not every respondent answered each question. Therefore, different questions may have varying numbers of respondents.

respondents of the survey held overwhelmingly positive attitudes about their heritage language, 30% of respondents also selected “At times I feel embarrassed” (Carreira & Kagan 2011). It is difficult to ascertain precisely what respondents had in mind with this selection as it could imply “life being made difficult by their being perceived as different” or “lamenting their lack of knowledge of the HL” (Carreira & Kagan 2011: 47). Examples of both interpretations were present in the general short answer responses asking students to relate an experience in school, home or neighborhood involving the HL (Carreira & Kagan 2011). Similarly, in a closer examination of the 121/122 Armenian responses in this survey, 29.8% of the respondents selected “At times I feel embarrassed” (Carreira et al. 2009) The detailed analysis of the Armenian cohort’s short answer responses helps illuminate and decipher the “embarrassment” expressed by nearly a third of the participants. While the open-ended responses conveyed predominantly positive experiences with the HL, both in and outside of school, there were quite a few reflecting the embarrassment heritage speakers experienced because of teasing, ridicule, and intimidation during interactions with more skilled peers, family and community members. The following examples offer a glimpse into the respondents’ negative experiences.

My heritage language has never really caused a problem. The only time it becomes an issue is when I try to speak it, particularly with those who speak it much better than I. It's hurtful when others harass you for speaking the same language differently. My HL is weak because we do not speak it much at home, that is why I'm taking the classes at UCLA.

My HL became a problem when my peers started to tease me about my dialect. I mix a bit of Eastern Armenian from Armenia and Eastern Armenian from Iran because my parents are from different countries. This made it difficult for me to be comfortable speaking in my HL amongst my peers, so for a long time I wouldn't.

There have been several cases where I felt embarrassed to speak when someone's skills are more advanced than mine. Therefore, [I] did not speak.

Instances with my family have been really moments of tests for me. So sometimes I feel embarrassed and sometimes I feel proud, depending on how well I used the language.

But the other day I was conversing with one of my older cousins and she complimented me on the level and improvement of my Armenian. It felt really good. But sometimes I get stuck, especially when debating an idea with my dad and begin speaking English to get my point across and that makes me feel embarrassed.

I was ridiculed once by a very old man at work for explaining something in Armenian.

Many individuals in my hometown speak my heritage language so it is very valuable knowing it. However, as years went by and I stopped learning my heritage language it became hard to communicate with it. Knowing that I was speaking incorrectly, made me embarrassed and I became less willing to communicate in my heritage language and at times avoided this. This also contributed to me forgetting how to speak in my heritage language.

Furthermore, when respondents were asked to self-assess their knowledge of the HL across the four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), not surprisingly, they considered their oral skills in the HL to be significantly stronger than their literacy skills (Carreira & Kagan 2011). The same pattern was replicated in the 121/122 responses by Armenian heritage learners (Carreira et al. 2009). More telling, however, were the respondents' answers to the following question:

**37. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being “not important” and 5 being “extremely important”, how important is it for you to accomplish the following goals in your HL class?**

	One	Two	Three	Four	Five
Improve speaking	121	85	144	232	1030
Improve listening	126	113	210	292	868
Improve reading	120	63	143	283	1000
Improve writing	108	53	133	245	1070
Improve grammatical accuracy	109	56	167	287	990
Increase vocabulary	111	44	101	240	1109

Figure 5.2: Importance of various goals in HL class (Carreira et al. 2009)

In the general responses to the survey as depicted in the chart above, most respondents marked all of the six goals as important, with priority given to expanding vocabulary, closely followed by improving writing, speaking and reading (Carreira et al. 2009). However, when looking at the

121/122 Armenian responses in the table below, “improve vocabulary” and “improve speaking” received the highest marks (88 and 85) (Carreira et al 2009).

Answer Options	1	2	3	4	5	Response Count
Improve speaking.	11	5	8	13	85	122
Improve listening.	13	8	19	20	61	121
Improve reading.	13	6	13	14	75	121
Improve writing.	9	6	11	16	78	120
Improve grammatical accuracy.	9	6	14	18	75	122
Increase vocabulary.	10	3	5	15	88	121
					<i>answered question</i>	122
					<i>skipped question</i>	7

Figure 5.3: Importance of various goals in HL class (122 Armenian responses)

Revealingly, in the 27 in-depth interviews conducted for this project, an overwhelming majority reported that listening and speaking were their strongest abilities in Armenian followed by reading and writing. Although one would assume that the weakest skills would be selected as those in need of most improvement, almost all respondents gave priority to improving their speaking. Additionally, both in the general results of the survey and in the Armenian responses, the most common responses HLLs gave for enrolling in HL courses were 1) to learn about their cultural and linguistic roots and 2) to communicate better with friends and family in the U.S. (Carreira et al. 2009). As evidenced in the discussion of the survey results above, the emphasized desire to develop verbal skills (expanded vocabulary and improved speaking abilities) in order to enhance communication abilities demonstrates an integral need in this area for HLLs, especially for the Armenian cohort.

Finally, the most direct attestation to the occurrence described in this chapter is Stephen Krashen’s article (1998) on the phenomenon of “language shyness,” that describes the reticence heritage speakers experience in interactions with more proficient speakers of the heritage language. Similar to this data sample, Krashen’s study is based on case histories with fairly competent heritage speakers who lack late-acquired features of the language critical for marking politeness or social class that typically do not interfere with communication (1998). However,

because HL speakers are members of the HL group, their imperfections are very salient to more proficient speakers, who may respond by correcting and even with ridicule. Such responses can be devastating to less proficient HL speakers. Error correction and criticism do not help them; they have the opposite effect: Rather than risk error, they interact less in the HL (Krashen 1998: 41).

As confirmed by Krashen (1998) ridicule and criticism have extremely adverse effects on the confidence and willingness of heritage speakers to engage in interactions with more proficient speakers, which is the most critical method of improving their ability in the heritage language.

In order to present a thorough portrayal of the deleterious impact of the cycle presented above, an introduction to prominent theories on language acquisition and development will be essential. Therefore, after a brief recapitulation of Krashen's comprehensible input hypothesis, this chapter will proceed to demonstrate the various components involved in this destructive cycle and its devastating consequences for the development of stronger proficiency among Armenian heritage speakers.

### **The Comprehensible Input Hypothesis**

Stephen Krashen's influential proposal on second language acquisition and development, commonly referred to as the Comprehensible Input Hypothesis, includes the following five hypotheses, which will be briefly summarized below: 1) The Acquisition-Learning Distinction, 2) The Natural Order Hypothesis, 3) The Monitor Hypothesis, 4) The Input Hypothesis, and 5) The Affective Filter Hypothesis.

The first hypothesis posits that there are two distinct and independent ways of developing competence in a second language: *acquisition*, a subconscious and implicit process similar to the way children develop ability in their first language ("picking up" a language) and *learning*, a

conscious, formal, and explicit learning based on grammar and rules (Krashen 2009). The second hypothesis states that people acquire the rules of language in a predictable order, not determined solely by formal simplicity, with some rules tending to come early and others late (Krashen 1985). The third hypothesis describes how acquisition and learning are used in language production, with the ability to produce language stemming from acquired competence, and learned knowledge serving only as an editor or monitor to make corrections (Krashen 1985). The fourth and arguably most important hypothesis argues that the only way human beings acquire language is by understanding messages, that is, by receiving “comprehensible input.”

We progress along the natural order (hypothesis 2) by understanding input that contains structures at our next ‘stage’ – structures that are a bit beyond our current level of competence. (We move from  $i$ , our current level, to  $i + 1$ , the next level along the natural order, by understanding input containing  $i + 1$ .) We are able to understand language containing unacquired grammar with the help of context, which includes extra-linguistic information, our knowledge of the world, and previous acquired linguistic competence (Krashen 1985: 80).

The two corollaries to this fourth hypothesis propose that with sufficient comprehensible input, speaking will naturally ‘emerge’ (it cannot be taught directly) and if the input is understood, the necessary grammar will be automatically provided (Krashen 1985). The final hypothesis, critically important for the arguments developed in this chapter, maintains that in order to fully process comprehensible input, the acquirer needs to be “open” to the input and not “on the defensive” (Krashen 1985). Affective filters such as lack of motivation and self-confidence or high anxiety about weaknesses being revealed function as mental blocks, preventing acquirers from fully utilizing the comprehensible input they receive. In other words, “the filter is down



when the acquirer is not concerned with the possibility of failure in language acquisition and when he considers himself to be a potential member of the group speaking the target language” (Smith 1982a, 1983 cited in Krashen 1985: 82). As Krashen suggests, the five hypotheses can be synthesized into a single claim: “people acquire second languages only if they obtain comprehensible input and if their affective filters are low enough to allow the input ‘in.’ When the filter is ‘down’ and appropriate comprehensible input is presented (and comprehended), acquisition is inevitable” (1985: 82).

All five hypotheses reviewed above are significant in the understanding of the processes that shape language acquisition and development, both in the case of first and second language acquisition (Krashen 2009), and undoubtedly for heritage language development, which falls somewhere along this continuum (Lynch 2003; Benmamoun et al. 2010). As will be demonstrated in the remainder of this chapter, the constant anxiety and fear of judgment associated with interacting in the heritage language produces extremely high affective filters that reduce the impact of the comprehensible input received (Hypothesis 5). Furthermore, and even more damaging, the fear of criticism leads speakers to avoid interactions with more competent speakers, who are the richest sources of comprehensible input, thereby reducing the opportunities of improving and developing their proficiency in the heritage language.

### **Teasing, Error Correction, and Criticism**

As a result of the limited comprehensible input and opportunities for the development of the heritage language in a typical immigrant setting, heritage speakers often produce speech riddled with non-standard elements in phonology, morphology, register, and semantics (see Chapter 3 on Linguistic Features). One of the major contributing factors to the anxiety that heritage speakers constantly experience when speaking the heritage language is the explicit

display of these errors for public scrutiny by more proficient family and HL community members, even when done in good humor. From a very young age heritage speakers, especially those born in the U.S., recount memories and experiences of being teased for their “cute” or “funny” Armenian, often growing up as the butt of many jokes. Speakers describe being called on by parents to repeat an erroneous phrase or word in front of guests for entertainment, resulting in giggles and laughs from everyone. Although family members probably view these instances of teasing as innocent jokes, the selected responses presented below demonstrate that being singled out as a source of ridicule undoubtedly takes a toll on speakers’ self-esteem and willingness to engage in future communication in the heritage language.

A respondent remarked on feeling uncertain about the value of her parents’ seemingly positive comments about her Armenian as an American-born Armenian:

Շ: Ok: Ուրիշ որեւէ մի տեղ կա՞ որ անհանգիստ ես զգում, երբ որ հայերեն ես խոսում:

Թ: Ըմ մեկ-մեկ ընտանիքի հետ որովհետեւ կասեն. Վա՛յ սիրեմ քո հայերենը եւ չգիտեմ ասում են որտեւ լավ եմ խոսում, որպէս մեկը որ Ամերկայում եմ ծնվել, թե ընդհարապէս ահավոր մի հայերեն եմ խոսում:

S: Ok: Is there any other place where you feel uncomfortable when you speak Armenian?

T: Um sometimes with family because they’ll say: “Oh how I love your Armenian!” And I don’t know if they are saying that ‘cause I speak well as someone born in America, or because I generally speak an awful (kind of) Armenian.

*[T.Y. / Age 21 / F / Birthplace – Yerevan, Armenia / Age at immigration– 1 year 8 months]*

Similarly, in response to where and with whom she feels uncomfortable speaking Armenian, another respondent communicated her realization of having an “ugly” accent because of friends and family bringing it to her attention through teasing.

Հա ok definitely չեմ սիրում ընգերներիս հետ խոսամ որտեւ նկատել են որ ակցենտ ունեմ like I don’t know why ու հմի սկսել են բառեր ասեն ոնց որ ես եմ ասում and like it sounds so ugly ու so չեմ սիրում իրանց հետ խոսալ: Ըը երեւի ը

ընտանիքիս որ, իրանք էլ են ասում, նկատում են, like մամաս ասում է like եթե բառ ասեմ՝ ինքը իմ ակցենտով կասի:

Yeah, **ok I definitely** don't like to speak to my friends 'cause they've noticed that I have an accent, **like I don't know why**, and now [*dialectal variant*] they've started saying words like I say them **and like it sounds so ugly** and **so** I don't like to speak with them. Uhh probably uh with family I am uncomfortable 'cause they say it also, they notice, **like** my mom says, **like** if I say a word, she'll say it with my accent.

[G.K. / Age 21 / F / Birthplace – Yerevan, Armenia / Age at immigration– 10 months]

Frequently, unfamiliar community members will not hesitate to point out an error made by a younger speaker, openly displaying their disapproval. In the example below, a heritage speaker narrates an experience during a visit to a chiropractor, in which her lacking abilities in register were brought forth, leading to her realization that her Armenian is in need of improvement, particularly with older people as they “get angry.”

Մի քանի տարի առաջ գնացել էինք chiropractor-ի մոտ: Հետո ասեց. «Բարեւ ձեզ: Ո՞նց եք»: Ես է(լ) ասեցի. «Լավ եմ: Դու ո՞նց ես»: Մեկ է(լ) (laugh), շուտ էկավ ասեց. «Ոնց ԵՔ»: Ես է(լ) ... 15 տարեկան էի, ասեցի էս ինչի՞ ջղայնացավ էս մարդը: Հետո պապայիս շուտ էկա ասեցի. «Բայց ինքը մի հատ մարդ ա, ինչի՞ պիտի ասեմ ոնց ԵՔ»: Բայց էս հետո էր, հետո պապաս ասեց. «Չէ: Պիտի ասես ոնց էք: Ո՞նց թե չգիտես:» Հետո դրանից հետո ըմ I realized (laugh) որ պտի ավելի լավ հայերեն խոսամ, especially with people older because իրանք ջղայնանում են (laugh):

A few years ago we had gone to a **chiropractor**. And then he said: “Hello [*formal/plural*]. How are you? [*formal/plural*]” And I said: “I am fine. How are you? [*informal/singular*].” And then (laugh) he turned around and said: “How are YOU? [*formal/plural*].” And I...I was 15 years old, I said, why did this man get so mad. And then I turned around to my dad and said: “But he is only one person, why do I have to say ‘how are YOU?’ [*formal/plural*]” But this was after, later my dad said: “No, you have to say, ‘how are you?’ [*formal/plural*]. What do you mean you don't know?” And then after that **I realized** (laugh) that I have to speak better Armenian, **especially with people older because** they get angry (laugh).

[L.A. / Age 20 / F / Birthplace – Glendale, CA / Parents repatriated to Armenia from Iran]

The constant attention to their mistakes causes an additional barrier in heritage speakers' attempts to interact in the heritage language. As another participant perceptively observed: "No one likes doing something they are not good at." The continuous criticism and ridicule, often with no malice on the part of family members and peers, creates an internalized sense of incompetence and inability. In the example below a participant shared the embarrassment she experiences at the possibility of being compared to the children of family friends who have much higher proficiency in Armenian. In response to where and with whom she feels uncomfortable speaking in Armenian, she responded:

Ընկերներիս հետ ու մեծերի like որ հայ են, like family friends էթե հայ են, like որտեղ իրանց էրեխեքը generally լավ են հայերեն խոսում ու հետո ես եմ բերանս բացում ու չեմ ուզում:

With my friends and grown ups, **like** who are Armenian, **like family friends** if they are Armenian, **like** 'cause their kids **generally** speak Armenian well and then I open my mouth and I don't want to.

*[G.K. / Age 21 / F / Birthplace – Yerevan, Armenia / Age at immigration– 10 months]*

Often, the risk of ridicule looms as a persistent threat during interactions in the heritage language. One participant directly stated the reasons behind her fear of speaking Armenian in public: "If you say something wrong, they laugh at you, or even worse, it turns into a joke."

The innocent teasing during childhood often transforms into overt error-correction or criticism as speakers grow older and are considered fully competent members of the HL community. Whereas family and community members view the blunders of children attempting to speak Armenian as harmless opportunities for teasing, the deficiencies of adult speakers warrant direct error-correction, criticism, and even admonishment. More proficient community members earnestly believe that as Armenians, heritage speakers should know and speak their

heritage language fluently (Bakalian 1993; Vaux 1999; Chapter 6 on Language Ideology). As a result, participants experience recurrent periods of language policing during which parents frequently interrupt them to correct their errors, relatives and family friends explicitly comment on their mistakes, and even reprimand them for not knowing better Armenian. This group of critics sometimes includes Armenian teachers who place much higher standards on their heritage students in language classrooms. A few participants recounted the harsh evaluations and criticism they received from instructors about the “broken” or “parochial” Armenian they speak. Predictably, due to the lack of access to a high quality and quantity of comprehensible input in the heritage language and the social contexts to use it, heritage speakers’ ability remains underdeveloped; yet unfortunately, community members tend to hold speakers to higher standards.

### **Debilitating Affective Filters: Lacking Self-Confidence and Fear of Judgment**

As a result of the recurrent scrutiny of their errors and deficiencies, heritage speakers often develop debilitating affective filters (Krashen - Hypothesis 5) such as low self-confidence, a fear of making mistakes, and fears of judgment when interacting in the heritage language, *particularly when they gauge that the interlocutor has much stronger proficiency*. A widespread series of evaluations, concerns, and fears stood out in the thorough analysis of speakers’ interviews about the anxiety-ridden internal process they go through during linguistic encounters with better skilled Armenian speakers. The following stages (not necessarily in consecutive order), were persistently present in speakers’ responses:

- Assess proficiency of interlocutor in comparison to one’s own skills
- Evaluate interlocutor’s proficiency as higher/better/stronger
- Worry about interlocutor noticing/”calling out” one’s errors

- Agonize about interlocutor judging one for lacking proficiency (sometimes even lacking intelligence)
- Become extremely nervous and anxious about the interaction
- Begin speaking poorly and making more errors than usual
- Become even more apprehensive and frightful about the interaction
- Become uneasy about future interactions

The steps above demonstrate that heritage speakers are constantly in the process of evaluating their own proficiency in comparison with the interlocutor's. Once the interlocutor is assessed as having stronger linguistic abilities in the heritage language, the anxiety over being judged and failing puts heritage speakers on the defensive, creating extremely high affective filters that cause the heritage speaker to stumble more and therefore, feel more apprehensive.

In the following exchanges speakers convey the full scope of the anxieties connected with the fear of erring in front of more skilled interlocutors, particularly with those who are older and/or unfamiliar.

Շ: Ok: Որտե՞ղ եւ ո՞ւմ հետ ես անհանգիստ զգում:

Ա: Անհանգի՞ստ:

Շ: Երբ որ հայերեն ես խոսում:

Ա: Ընթրո՞րի: Ով որ ինձանից ավելի շատ լավ գիտի: Եթե օրինակ լինի ըն մեր դասարանի ընկերուհիի հետ շատ հանգիստ կարող եմ խոսալ, բայց եթե լինի մեկը անծանոթ կամ ավելի բարձր պաշտոնով, արդեն ըստեղ դժվարանում եմ:

Շ: Ինչո՞ւ ես դժվարանում: Ինչո՞ւ ես անհանգիստ զգում:

Ա: Որ սխալ անեմ:

S: Ok: Where and with whom do you feel uncomfortable?

A: Uncomfortable?

S: When you speak Armenian.

A: Uh with everyone. Anyone who knows [Armenian] much better than me. If, for example, it is uh with a friend [*incorrectly declined*] from our class, I can speak very comfortably, but if it is someone I don't know or someone with a higher job, already there I have difficulties.

S: Why do you have difficulties? Why do you feel uncomfortable?

A: In case I make a mistake.

[A.K. / Age 19 / F / Birthplace – Abovian, Armenia / Age at immigration– 6 / Parents repatriated from Iran to Armenia]

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Շ: Ok: Որտե՞ղ եւ ո՞ւմ հետ ես անհանգիստ զգում, երբ որ հայերեն ես խոսում:

Ա: Այստեղ: (laughter)

Շ: Բայց ինչն՞ է:

Ա: Ըմմ որ ըն զգում ես որ դեմինդ ավելի լավ ա խոսում ու քո սխալները զգում ա շատ անհանգիստ ես լինում:

Շ: Ok: Բացի էստեղից, ուրիշ որտե՞ղ ես անհանգիստ զգում:

Ա: Ըն էլի մեծահասակների հետ որոնք հասկանում են ու judge են անում քո հայերենը:

S: Ok. Where and with whom do you feel uncomfortable, when you speak Armenian?

A: Here: (laughter)

S: But why?

A: Um when uh you feel that the one opposite you speaks better and senses your errors, you become very uncomfortable.

S: Ok: Besides here, where else do you feel uncomfortable?

A: Uh again with older people who understand and **judge** your Armenian.

[A.H./ Age 19/ F / Birthplace – Yerevan, Armenia/ Age at immigration– 8]

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Շ: Ok: Որտե՞ղ եւ ո՞ւմ հետ ես հանգիստ զգում, երբ որ հայերեն ես խոսում:

Ք: Ծնողներիս հետ եւ տատիկ-պապիկիս:

Շ: Ինչն՞ է: Ինչն՞ է ես հանգիստ զգում:

Ք: Ըմ...(inaudible) (laugh)...um I don't know, հայերենս էդքան լավ չի so I guess իրանց հետ ավելի հանգիստ եմ խոսում: Like նույն նախադասությունը կարամ ասենք ձեզ հետ խոսամ եւ սաղ սխալ ստացվի (laughter): So I don't know որ հանգիստ եմ ավելի համ էլ լավ եմ խոսում:

Շ: Ok: Ըմ որտե՞ղ եւ ո՞ւմ հետ ես անհանգիստ զգում, երբ որ հայերեն ես խոսում:

Ք: Ձեր հետ (laughter), ըն ասենք տարիքով մեկի, անձանոթի հետ:

Շ: Ըհրի: Ինչն՞ է ես անհանգիստ զգում:

Ք: Որովհետեւ ես լավ չեմ խոսում, so I fe, I don't know, it's (laugh): Ոնց որ գիտեմ սխալ եմ խոսում, բայց էդքան էլ չգիտեմ որ ճիշտ խոսամ ասենք, you know?

S: Where and with whom do you feel comfortable, when you speak Armenian?

K: With my parents and my grandma-grandpa.

S: Why? Why do you feel comfortable?

K: Um...(inaudible) (laugh)...**um I don't know**, my Armenian is not that good **so I guess** with them I speak more comfortably. **Like** I can speak the same sentence, let's say, with you [*formal*] and it can all turn out wrong (laughter). **So I don't know**, when I am comfortable, I also speak better.

S: **Ok**. Um where and with whom do you feel uncomfortable when you speak Armenian?

K: With you [*formal*](laughter), uh let's say with someone older, with an unfamiliar person.

S: Uhuh. Why do you feel uncomfortable?

K: Because I don't speak well, **so I fe, I don't know, it's** (laugh). It's like I know I speak wrong, but I don't know that much so I can speak proper, **you know?**

[*K.N./ Age 19/ F / Birthplace – Yerevan, Armenia/ Age at immigration– 5*]

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Շ: Ok: Որտե՞ղ եւ ո՞ւմ հետ ես հանգիստ զգում, երբ որ հայերեն ես խոսում:

Ս: Տան մեջ:

Շ: Տան մեջ: Ինչո՞ւ ես հանգիստ տան մեջ:

Ս: Ըմմ իմանում եմ որ իմ հայերենը շատ մաքուր չի կամ շատ proper չի, բայց ը տան մեջ չեմ focus անում, որ proper խոսամ, ավելի հանգիստ ծնողներիս հետ, կամ եթե քրոջս հետ, բայց եթե ավելի մեծ հասակի հետ կամ տատիկի-պապիկի որ փորձում եմ you know proper խոսամ ավելի դժվար ա, դժվարանում եմ, (ըհրհ) so ավելի փորձում եմ ըզզուշ խոսամ, (ըմմմ) հանգիստ չեմ եղբան (laugh):

S1: Ok: Where and with whom do you feel comfortable when you speak Armenian?

S2: At home.

S1: At home. Why do you feel comfortable at home?

S2: Um I know that my Armenian is not very clean or very **proper**, but uh at home I don't **focus** so I can speak **proper**. [I am] more comfortable with my parents or if [I am speaking] with my sister, but if I try with an older person or grandma-grandpa to **you know** speak **proper**, it's harder, I have difficulties, (uhuh) **so** I try to speak more carefully, (uhuh) I am not that comfortable (laugh).

[*S.S. / Age 22 / F / Birthplace – Glendale, CA / Parents repatriated to Armenia from Iran*]

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Շ: Որտե՞ղ եւ ո՞ւմ հետ ես հայերեն խոսում:

Ս: Ըր ծնողներիս հետ, ըր եւ եթե գնամ օրինակ ընկերուհիս տան մեջ, իրա ծնողների հետ ստիպված հայերեն եմ խոսում, բայց եղ վախտ էնքան եմ like ըր դժվարանում որտեւ անձանոթ եմ, ուզում եմ ամեն ինչը ճիշտ ասեմ (laugh):

S: Where and with whom do you speak Armenian?



A: Uh with my parents, uh and if, for example, I go in *[postposition used instead of locative case]* my girlfriend's *[declined incorrectly]* house, with her parents I have to speak Armenian, but at that time I have so much **like** uh difficulty 'cause I'm unfamiliar *[with them]*, I want to say everything right (laugh).

*[A.K. / Age 19 / F / Birthplace – Abovian, Armenia / Age at immigration – 6 / Parents repatriated from Iran to Armenia]*

Many respondents revealed the discomfort and tension that envelops them when speaking in Armenian precisely because of the fear that the interlocutor with higher proficiency will immediately notice and “call them out” on their errors and poor Armenian. Below a speaker expressed the intense pressure involved in communications with relatives who are native speakers and can potentially notice her errors.

Շատ դժվար ա ինձի, նույնիսկ բարեկամներ, որ եթե շատ հաճախ չեմ տեսնում իրենց բայց ըմ գիտեմ որ միայն հայերեն են խոսում, ես շատ եմ դժվարանում իրենց հետ հայերեն խոսալուց որտեւ ը ինչ որ մի երեւի ըմ like ըր ոնց բացատրեմ pressure եմ զգում, ոնց որ չեմ ուզում սխալվեմ ու դրանից ավելի շատ եմ սխալվում ըմ...

It's really difficult for me, even with relatives, if I don't see them very often um I know they speak only Armenian, I have great difficulty with them in speaking Armenian 'cause uh I feel some kind of uh **like** uh, how can I explain it, **pressure**, it's like I don't want to make a mistake and because of that I make even more mistakes, um...

*[S.V. / Age 21 / F / Birthplace – Yerevan, Armenia / Age at immigration – 4 months]*

In the following excerpt a speaker articulated her fears when speaking to elders with higher proficiency.

Ըմմ որտեւ ինձ թվում ա թե իրանք բոլոր իմ սխալները պիտի նկատեն ու ինձ թվում ա նկատում են իրոք որովհետեւ ը քանի որ ըր դե հայերենը իրանց, շատ վարժ են հայերենից, ընդեղ են մեծացել, սովորել ըր կամ որ իրանց մտքով չի անցնի որ ըմ մարդ կարա ես ինչ բանը ինչ որ սխալ ասի so իրանց համար շատ հեշտ ա նկատել: Նույնը եթե ես մեկը ըմ լսեմ մեկին անգլերեն խոսալիս like անպայման կնկատեմ, նույնիսկ ս սխալ բաները, ը փոքր սխալմունքները, ը դրա համար միշտ էդ ձեւ ը like դժվար ա ինձի որ մտածում եմ որ հետս մի բան սխալ կասեմ:

Uhh, ‘cause it seems to me that they must notice all of my mistakes and it seems to me they really do notice because uh since uh their Armenian, they are very fluent in Armenian, they grew up there, studied there, uhh or it won’t cross their mind that uh a person can say this thing wrong somehow, **so** for them it’s really easy to notice. It’s the same if I hear uh someone speaking in English, **like** I’d definitely notice, even the wrong things, uh the small mistakes and that’s why, it’s always like difficult for me, when I think that I am about to say something wrong.

[S.V. / Age 21 / F / Birthplace – Yerevan, Armenia / Age at immigration – 4 months]

Similarly, the following speakers expressed their concerns about speaking Armenian in front of a group of interlocutors with better proficiency.

Է: Yeah: Երբ որ ըր like խումբի առաջ եմ հայերեն խոսում: Եւ հասկապէս որ իմանում եմ իրանք ավել լավ են իմանում (laughter): Եւ ըր եւ երբ որ իմանում եմ որ կարող են you know սխալներս you know իմանում են երբ եմ մի բան սխալ ասում:

Շ: Հմմտ: Ok: So ինչո՞ւ ես անհանգիստ զգում: Որովհետեւ կարծում ես քո սխալները կնկատեն:

Է: Yeah որտեւ իմանում եմ սխալ եմ ասում, so ըմ I mean like իմանում եմ որ սխալներ ունեմ, բայց yeah ըմ էտ ա եւ I don’t know, it’s intimidating sometimes, so yeah (laugh).

E: **Yeah**, when uh **like** I speak Armenian in front of a group. And especially when I know that they know better [Armenian] (laughter). And uh and when I know that they can, **you know**, my mistakes, **you know**, they know when I am saying something wrong.

S: Hmmm. **Ok. So** why are you uncomfortable? Because you think they notice your errors.

E: **Yeah** ‘cause I know I speak wrong, **so** um **I mean like** I know that I have mistakes, but **yeah**, um that’s it, and **I don’t know, it’s intimidating sometimes, so yeah** (laugh).

[E.M. / Age 20 / F / Birthplace – Glendale, CA / Parents from Tehran, Iran]

Շ: Իսկ որտե՞ղ եւ ո՞ւմ հետ ես անհանգիստ զգում, երբ հայերեն ես խոսում:

Ա: Երեւի, ըր դասի մեջ որովհետեւ ավելի շատ ըր աչքեր ու ականջները իմ վրա են եւ ըր իրանք լավ էլ գի կը կի կիմանան երբ ըր ճիշտ չեմ ասում կամ շատ դժվար ա իմ համար: Yeah... Երբ երբ մեկի համար եմ խոսում... like, I guess, when it’s *for* something, there is like a pressure *to* speak, if that makes sense. Yeah..

S: And where and with whom do you feel uncomfortable when you speak Armenian?

A: Probably, uh in class [*postposition used instead of locative case*] because there are more uh eyes and ears on me and uh they very well kn... wi... will know when uh I don't say something right or it's really hard for me. **Yeah**... When I am speaking for someone... **like, I guess, when it's for something, there is like a pressure to speak, it that makes sense. Yeah**...

[A.A. / Age 22 / F / Birthplace – Pasadena, CA / Father born in Tehran, Iran / Mother born in Yerevan, Armenia]

Additionally, some heritage speakers astutely remarked that people assess not only their language but also their intelligence based on their linguistic competence. As a result, they voiced anxieties that interlocutors will judge them as less intelligent based on lacking proficiency in Armenian. This strong sense of fear of judgment is communicated in the following examples:

Ամա[ն]չում եմ որ ըմ հայերենս շատ ինձ թվում ա ցածր մակարդակի ա, ըմ ու ոնց որ ասեցի բարեկամներիս հետ շատ ժամանակ ը վարժ չեմ խոսում ը ու իրանք գիտեն որ ես իսկաջի եմ բայց երեւի ինձ միշտ թվում ա թե մի կողմից կարող ա կասկածեն ըմ որովհետեւ մարդկանց ըմ ասենք ը գիտելիքները շատ ժամանակ խոսալուց ես կարողանամ ըմ ը like gauge անել:

I am ashamed because it seems to me that my Armenian is at a very low level, and um, as I said, often I don't speak very fluently with my relatives and uh they know that I am smart, but probably, it always seems to me, that in a way they may doubt [it] um because um often you are able **like** to gauge people's let's say um knowledge from their speaking.

[S.V. / Age 21 / F / Birthplace – Yerevan, Armenia / Age at immigration – 4 months]

Շ: Ok: Կարծում ես քո ապագայի համար լա՞վ է, որ հայերեն իմանաս: Կօզնի՞ք եզ թե՞ չի օգնի:

Է: Այո: Շատ կօզնի:

Շ: Ինչո՞ւ կօզնի:

Է: Ըն to better communicate: Ավել շատ մարդկանց հետ եմ կարող խոսել, եթե իրանց լեզուն հասկանում եմ, եւ ըմ I don't know, երբ որ ավել լավ ես խոսում, ըմմ like people take you more seriously. So yeah...

S: Ok: Do you think knowing Armenian is good for your future? Will it help you or not?

E: Yes. It'll help a lot.

S: Why will it help?

E: Uh **to better communicate**. I can speak with more people, if I understand their language, and um **I don't know**, when you speak better, umm **like people take you more seriously. So yeah...**

*[E.M. / Age 20 / F / Birthplace – Glendale, CA / Parents from Tehran, Iran]*

The apprehension of judgment along with the pressure of erring creates an intimidating sense of anxiety when interacting in the heritage language. In the following excerpt, a speaker movingly incorporated a physical metaphor for the debilitating effects of an internalized sense of inability and helplessness.

Շ: Որտե՞ղ եւ ո՞ւմ հետ ես անհանգիստ եւ ինչո՞ւ ես անհանգիստ զգում:  
Ա: Ասենք ըրրը բարեկամների հետ, բարեկամների հետ եմ անհա, ասենք երբ որ հու, հյուր ա գալիս, ու ուզում են որ բացատրեմ ը ինչով ես, կհարցնեն ինչով ես զբաղվում ըր ետ ժամանակ դժվար էր գալիս ինձ համար որ, սենց ոնց որ լեզուս մեկը բռնել ա ու չի թողում որ խոսա գիտես, I mean սենց դժվար էր ինձ համար, չեմ իմանում ինչու ...

S: Where and with whom do you feel uncomfortable and why do you feel uncomfortable (when speaking Armenian)?

A: With uhhh relatives, let's say, with relatives I feel uncom..., when gu, guests let's say, when guests come over and they want me to explain what I, they'll ask what do you occupy yourself with, uh at that time it would be difficult for me to, it's as if someone has a hold of my tongue and won't let go for it to speak you know, **I mean** it was so difficult for me, I don't know why...

*[A.F. / Age 19 / M / Birthplace – Burbank, CA / Father born in Armenia / Mother born in Aleppo, Syria, repatriated to Armenia at age 16 before moving to U.S.]*

As the examples above illustrate, speakers are persistently inflicted with affective filters such as fear of failure, lacking self-confidence, and apprehension of judgment that are constantly “up.” Because of the high levels of stress and anxiety involved during interactions in Armenian these affective filters function as mental blocks, not only obstructing the reception of comprehensible input, but also impeding the speakers’ ability to perform at their potential.

## Avoiding Interaction in HL/Switch to English

Due to the amplified fears and pressures associated with performing in front of more competent Armenian speakers, heritage speakers feel most comfortable interacting in Armenian with those whom they perceive to have equal or lower proficiency. Speakers repeatedly reported feeling secure speaking in Armenian only with those peers whose Armenian they observed to be “just as bad/poor/broken,” if not worse than theirs, as this would eliminate the fear of criticism and judgment. As one participant explained, he is comfortable speaking Armenian with his peers because: “I think that I speak wrong, so maybe they speak wrong as well.” Or as another speaker explained, she only feels relaxed interacting in Armenian with her close friends because “they all speak poorly” and she “does not feel bad” during the interaction. In the following excerpt, a speaker explains the difference in stress levels between erring in front of his friends, who will most likely not even perceive the presence of a mistake and his girlfriend’s parents, with whom the stakes of making an error are much higher.

Շ: Որտե՞ղ եւ ո՞ւմ հետ ես հանգիստ զգում, երբ որ հայերեն ես խոսում:  
Վ: Օրինակ ըմ Անին ըր իրա ծնողները բան ըր շատ շատ լավ են հայերեն հասկանում, չէ՞ (ըհըհ) իրանք, իրանց, իմ ընկերներիս հետ ավելի ազատ եմ խոսում որտեւ թեկուզ եթե մի բան սխալ լինի բան ըր եղ նուրբ բաները էլի, օրինակ, օրինակ չէի իմանում եղ Անին ինձի ասեց. օրինակ ես միշտ գյազար էի ասում բայց գազար պիտի ասես, չէ՞ (ըհըհ), բայց եղի ընկերներիս մոտ եթե ասեմ, չեն իմանա, բայց եթե ինչ որ մի տեղ մի փոքր բան սխալ ըլնի հաստատ կնկա կնկատեն, չէ՞, (laughter) դրա համար ավելի մի քիչ սենց մտածելով եմ խոսում բան, ըտեղից ա մի քիչ ըր որ նեղվում եմ բայց, օրինակ ընենց մարդիկ որ իմ չափ գիտեն հանգիստ խոսում եմ դե եթե սխալ էլ լինի, կանցնի կգնա, ոչ/2 մեկ ոչ/2 մի բան չի ջոգի բայց ը իրանց մոտ դե կճշ, ճշտեն բան, մի բան որ սխալ եմ ասել:

S: Where and with whom do you feel comfortable when you speak Armenian?

V: For example, um Ani uh her parents uh they understand Armenian very very well, right? (uhuh), they, their, with my friends I speak more free ‘cause even if something’s wrong or something uh those subtle things you know, for example, for example I didn’t know, Ani told me this: for example I always used to say *gyazar* [*carrot pronounced with*

*additional glide – dialectal variant*] but you have to say *gazar* [*carrot – standard pronunciation*], right? (uhuh). But if I say that with my friends, they won't know, but if in some place one little thing will be wrong they [the girlfriend's parents] will no.. notice, right? (laughter). That's why I speak with a little more thought or something, it's from that that I am uh a bit uneasy, but for example, [with] those people who know as much as I do, I speak comfortably, and even if there's a mistake, it'll pass, no one will notice anything, but uh with them [girlfriend's parents], well, they'll corr, correct it or something, if I've said something wrong.

[V.A. / Age 21 / M / Birthplace – Yerevan, Armenia / Age at immigration - 1]

In the example below, a speaker relates feeling comfortable interacting in Armenian with a friend whose Armenian is just as poor because she will not incur judgment.

Շ: Ok: Որտե՞ղ եւ ո՞ւմ հետ ես հայերէն խոսում եթէ ընդհանուր նկարագրես:  
 Ս: Մորս հետ, ըմ մի հաս պարսկահայ ընկերուհի ունեմ, ավելի շատ իրա հետ:  
 Շ: Ինչո՞ւ: Որովհետեւ ինքը լավ անգլերէն չգիտի՞:  
 Ս: Լավ հայերէն չգիտի (laughter): Իրա դիմաց ավելի հանգիստ եմ զգում: Հետո իրար հասկանում ենք, in that sense, ավելի շատ:  
 Շ: Վե՞րջ: Ինչո՞ւ ես հանգիստ զգում մորդ եւ այդ ընկերուհուդ հետ:  
 Ս: Ըմ չեն, they don't judge me, չեն judge անել (laugh) (ըհըհ), ըմ ը չեմ զգում անպայման պիտ անպայման պիտի ճիշտ խոսամ հետները (ըհըհ) կամ կասեն oh ես սխալ բառ օգտագործեց կամ whatever (laugh):  
 Շ: Ըհըհ: Ըմ որտե՞ղ եւ ո՞ւմ հետ ես անհանգիստ զգում, երբ որ հայերէն ես խոսում եւ ինչո՞ւ:  
 Ս: (Laugh) Ըմ ընանց դիմաց որ շատ լավ են խոսում, կամ հայ հայոց լեզուն լավ գիտեն:

S1: **Ok**: Where and with whom do you speak Armenian, if you describe it generally?  
 S2: With my mother, um I have an Iranian-Armenian girlfriend, more so with her.  
 S1: Why? Because she doesn't know English well?  
 S2: She doesn't know Armenian well (laughter). I feel more comfortable with her. And we understand each other more, **in that sense**.  
 S1: That's it? Why do you feel comfortable with your mother and that girlfriend?  
 S2: Um they don't, **they don't judge me**, they don't **judge** to do [*infinitive*], um uh I don't feel that I ha.. have to speak proper with them (uhuh) or that they'll say, oh she used this wrong word or **whatever** (laugh).  
 S2: Uhuh. Um where and with whom do you feel uncomfortable, when you speak Armenian and why?  
 S1: (Laugh) In front of those [*reduced, dialectal variant*] who speak very well or know the Armenian language well.

[S.M. / Age 22 / F / Birthplace – Tehran, Iran / Age at immigration - 7]

More typically, when a difference in proficiency presents itself among peers, if possible, the simple solution rests in switching to English, a language comfortable for everyone. By default, this process of selection based on a desired ease of interaction typically excludes older native speakers, who are most competent in the heritage language and can provide the most comprehensible input. Often the shift to English is carried out in order to allow for better comprehension and social comfort; in other words, to save the lower-proficiency speaker from the taxing atmosphere of struggling to interact in Armenian. Below speakers describe the decision making process in switching to English during conversations with lower proficiency peers.

Շ: Իսկ որտե՞ղ եւ ո՞ւմ հետ ես անգլերէն խոսում:

Վ: Ըտենց իմ տարիքի մարդկանց հետ, ըմ մարդիկ որ հայ չեն՝ իրանց հետ, ըր կամ էլ որ հայ են ու ը զգում են որ նեղվում են *էջ* խոսալուց ինչ որ իրանց համար հարմար չի, որ որպէսզի ազատ խոսանք՝ անգլերէն որ հանգիստ հանգիստ խոսանք *էջ*, չ, դե որ իրանք անգլերէն էլ խոսանք ես էլ հայերէն մի քիչ տարօրինակ կըլնի...

S: And where and with whom do you speak English?

V: With people my age for example, um people who are not Armenian, with them, uh or those who are Armenian and uh they feel that they're uneasy/bothered about speaking [Armenian] you know, somehow it's not comfortable for them. [We speak in] English so that we'll speak freely, so that we speak comfortably you know, and if they speak in English and I in Armenian it'll be a little strange...

*[V.A. / Age 21 / M / Birthplace – Yerevan, Armenia / Age at immigration - 1]*

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Ա: Հետաքրքիր բանը որ մեր cousinները սաղ հայերէն չեն չեն խոսում, չեն փորձում որ խոսան սաղ օրը: Դու էլ անհանգիստ ես զգում որ ըսկսում ես հայերէն խոսալ որտեւ իրանք չեն օգտագործում: So ոնց որ ըսենց ամաչում ես որ հայերէն խոսաս ու չես իմանում եթե ուզում են կամ էլ չեն ուզում, եթե սխալ ա սխալ չի so ըտենց էլ դժվարանում ա: Ըր իրանք, իրանց հետ որ հայերէն եմ խոսում, իրանք էլ որ ուզում են պատասխանեն, դժվարանում են, so անգլերէն եմ խոսում իրանց հետ որ իրանք չամաչեն կամ վատ չզգան: I mean էտի էլ իմ սխալն ա, պիտի պիտի ըտենց մի քիչ գոռենք որ սովորեն, բայց ըր իմ կարծիքով

էտի իրանց ծնողները թող էտ դրա մասին մտածեն: So I mean, ես ինչ որ կարամ անում եմ, ուզում եմ իրանց հետ հայերեն խոսամ բայց տեսնում եմ որ դժվար ա իրանց համար, I mean հեշտ չի գալիս, ու մանավանդ որ ասենք ծնողներս իրանց հետ են խոսում, հայերեն, ու ամեն ինչը հայերենով են, որտեւ ուզում են որ էրեխեքը հայերեն խոսան, բայց իրանք էլ որ տեսնում են սենց շփոթվում են, դժվարանում են, so...

A: The interesting things [is] that all our **cousins** [*plural suffix attached in Armenian*] don't don't speak Armenian, they don't try to speak it all day. And you feel uncomfortable when you start speaking Armenian 'cause they don't use it. **So** it's like you are kind of embarrassed to speak Armenian and you don't know if they want it or they don't want it, if it's wrong or not wrong, **so** in that way it (interactions) becomes difficult. Uh they, when I speak to them in Armenian, and when they want to answer, they have a hard time, **so** I speak English with them so that they don't get embarrassed or feel bad. **I mean** and that's my mistake, we have to have to push them a little so they learn, but uh in my opinion let their parents worry about that. **So I mean**, I do what I can, I want to speak Armenian with them but I see that it's hard for them, **I mean** it doesn't come easy, and especially when let's say my parents speak to them, Armenian, and everything are [*misconjugated*] in Armenian, 'cause they want the kids to speak Armenian, but they (his parents) notice that they (the cousins) get flustered, have difficulties, so...

[A.F. / Age19 / M / Birthplace – Burbank, CA / Father born in Armenia / Mother born in Aleppo, Syria, repatriated to Armenia at age 16 before moving to U.S.]

As demonstrated, the discomfort involved in exchanges between speakers with varying abilities does not only affect speakers with low proficiency. Even the most competent participants in this study, including a few speakers who arrived to the U.S. in their early teens, revealed that one of the biggest challenges for them during interactions with Armenian friends involves either translating what they have said in Armenian to English or maneuvering a switch to English in order to alleviate the distress of the lower proficiency interlocutor. As one highly competent trilingual participant explained, the choice of language with her friends depends on the most optimal ease of interaction:

Ընգերների ընկերուհիների հետ նայած ը իրանց հայերենը ինչքան ը, շատ ընգերներ ունեմ որոնք ստեղ են ծնվել(լ) մեծացել(լ), էդքան իրանց հայերենը լավ չի, իրա, ավելի շատ անգլերեն եմ խոսում բայց ընգերներ ունեմ որ հետները



շատ ազատ հայերեն եմ խոսում, կան նաև որ մենակ ռուսերեն եմ խոսում, հայերեն անգլերեն եղբան լավ չգիտեն: Ըն համալսարանում բնականաբար հիմնականում անգլերեն եմ խոսում: Նույնիսկ եթե հայեր են լինում, շատերը հայերեն չգիտեն դրա համար անգլերեն եմ խոսում:

With friends and girlfriends, it (the choice of language) depends on how much their Armenian (proficiency) is. I have a lot of friends who were born and raised here, their Armenian isn't good, with them I speak more English. But I have friends with whom I speak Armenian freely. There are those [with whom] I only speak Russian; they don't know Armenian or English well. At the university, I naturally mainly speak English. Even if there are Armenians, many don't know Armenian, that's why I speak English.

*[T.S. / Age21 / F/ Birthplace – Gyumri, Armenian /Age at immigration - 15]*

Additionally, the multiplicity of Armenian linguistic variants present in this community, namely Western Armenian, Eastern Armenian, and the Iranian-Armenian dialects, frequently enhances difficulties (perceived and real) in comprehension, speaking, and a sense of fitting in, leading either to a lack of interaction in the heritage language or a prompt switch to English. As iterated in Krashen's hypotheses, a sense of fitting in and potential group membership contribute strongly to improved language acquisition and development. The diversity of linguistic variants in this community causes an extra source of distress for heritage speakers, who already have internalized complexes about their abilities in their home variety of the language. In situations of contact with interlocutors of another background, speakers face an even more tasking challenge of interacting in an additional variety of the language and risking their prospective membership in the group.

A particularly salient example of this situation sometimes occurs when Eastern Armenian speaking youth attend Armenian schools in which the standard of instruction is Western Armenian. This was precisely the case of one participant, with an Eastern Armenian speaking father (and live-in grandparents) and American mother, who had attended Armenian school (K-12) in which Western Armenian was the standard of instruction. Although he had positive

attitudes about the school in general, he revealed extreme difficulties in Armenian class, during which teachers initially compared him to his older sister's exceptional performance from previous years and held him to the same high expectations. After detecting his poor proficiency, they "just ignored [him] pretty much...and kind of pushed [him] to the side of the classroom." As a result, not only did he feel out of place in school, but was also self-conscious about speaking Armenian at home with his father and grandparents. Although he reported that his father spoke to him in Armenian almost 90% of the time, he only responded in English due to his "broken" Armenian. When asked why he was enrolled in an Eastern Armenian course at UCLA, he explained that he "didn't want to be embarrassed when talking to [his] dad and for once wanted to speak fluent Eastern Armenian." Similarly, as another respondent described in the case of her younger sister who was already struggling with fluency in Eastern Armenian, the presence of multiple varieties may lead to more inhibition in speaking the heritage language.

A.G.B.U. ա գնում, տասերորդ դասարանի մեջ ա եւ ինքը արեւմտահայերէն ա սովորում so ավելի դժվար ա, չի ուզում մեր հետ խոսի որովհետեւ ասում ա իմ հայերենը հիմա ձեզնից տարբեր ա, չեմ ուզում խոսեմ:

She goes to **A.G.B.U.** She's in the tenth grade [*using postposition instead of locative case*] and she is learning Western Armenian so it's harder, she doesn't want to speak with us because she says, now my Armenian is different from yours, I don't want to speak.

[A.A. / Age 22 / F / Birthplace – Pasadena, CA / Father born in Tehran, Iran / Mother born in Yerevan, Armenia]

Tellingly, in both of the cases presented above, the younger sibling incurs much more difficulty with heritage language acquisition and development. As research demonstrates, proficiency in the heritage language usually declines with birth order, so that first-born children tend to develop higher levels of HL competence than do second and third-born children in bilingual families (Lambert & Taylor 1996; Zentella 1997 cited in Lynch 2003). Apparently, in the cases presented

above, the acquisition of another standard in the heritage language became too difficult of an obstacle to overcome for the younger siblings, who were already facing difficulties with their comparably poor proficiency in the home variant.

In the following example, a speaker discusses her inability to fit in during her teenage years because of her mixed linguistic features as a result of coming from a family of Iranian-Armenian descent that initially immigrated to Armenia and then to the US.

Մենք որ փոքր էինք, not փոքր, but like տասերեք տարեկան, իմ ընկերուհիները շատ հայաստանցի էին Գլենդեյլում, ու իմ խոսալու ձևեր տարբեր էր because ես պարսկահայ մի քիչ accent ունեմ ու բառերը, ըմ verb-երը կամ էս եմ անում էն եմ անում, իրանցից մի քիչ տարբեր, so իրանք միշտ ասում էին, դու պարսկահայ ես: Բայց հետո պարսկահայ ընկերուհիներին հետ` իրանք միշտ ասում էին դու հայաստանցի ես, մեզ նման չես: So ես like դրանից հետո, տասերեք-տասչորս տարեկանից հետո, էլ չէի սիրում հայերեն խոսելի որովհետեւ չգիտեի like ում հետ ոնց խոսամ, կամ accent-ու փոխեմ կամ չփոխեմ:

When we were little, **not** little, **but like** thirteen years old, many of my girlfriends were *hayastantsi* (from Armenia) in Glendale, and my way of speaking was different **because** I have a bit of a *parskahay* (Iranian-Armenian) **accent**, and the words, I would do this or that to the **verbs** [*plural suffix added in Armenian*], a little different from them, **so** they would always say you are *parskahay*. But then with my *parskahay* friends, they would always say you are *hayastantsi*, you are not like us. **So I like** after that, after age thirteen - fourteen, I didn't like speaking Armenian because I didn't know **like** how to speak with whom, or whether to change my **accent** [*Armenian possessive suffix attached*] or not.

[L.A. / Age 20 / F / Birthplace – Glendale, CA / Parents repatriated to Armenia from Iran]

This experience demonstrates strict linguistic boundaries that young people may impose on their peers in order to be granted access to membership in a group. The inability to meet those standards may discourage certain potential members from pursuing communication in the heritage language and instead, only enhance their sense of inability and fear.

When faced with interactions with another variant, some speakers, particularly those of Iranian-Armenian background, experience dialect shame, adding another layer of anxiety to the

existing equation already riddled with fears. In the following examples, a speaker of Iranian-Armenian background conveys the embarrassment of her own dialect and her frustration during interdialectal interactions.

Շ: Ok: Ո՞րը կուզենայիր ամենաշատը զարգացնել այս չորսից:

Ա: Խոսելը:

Շ: Խոսել լը: Ինչո՞ւ:

Ա: Որ ուրիշի տունն եմ գնում, իրանք որ հետս խոսում են, մի բառ չգիտեմ, կամ ամա(ն)չում եմ, կա՞ որ մամաս պապաս որ Պարսկաստանից են, իրանց բառերը, իմ բառերը մի քիչ ուրիշ ա քանց թե գնաս ուրիշ տեղ խոսաս: Կասեն՝ oh գրագետ չէ:

S: **Ok.** Which one would you like to develop most out of the four?

A: Speaking.

S: Speaking? Why?

A: When I go to someone else's house, when they speak with me, I don't know a word, or I am embarrassed, you know how my mom and dad are from Iran? Their words, my words are a little different compared to if you go and speak somewhere else. They'll say, oh she's not literate.

[A.K. / Age 19 / F / Birthplace – Abovian, Armenia / Age at immigration– 6 / Parents repatriated from Iran to Armenia]

Ա: Ուզում եմ կարողանալ նորմալ խոսել: (laughter) Ինձի շատ կարեւոր ա: Որ գնում եմ ընկերիս տ տունը, իրա ծնողները Լե՛նականցի են, եւ իրանք որ իմ հետ խոսեն մի անգամից չեմ կարողանում հետ պատասխանել: Ինչ որ ասեն կծիծաղամ (laugh): Շատ դժվար է իմ համար, ը, ու որ հայերը ունեն պարսկահայ, լե՛նականցի, էտի ահավոր է որ երկու մարդ ուզենա իրար հետ խոսել, էտ էտ մասը չեմ կարողանում: Եթե պարսկահայ լիներ կամ մի քիչ ինքն էլ տեստեմ էդքան ըը բարձր ձեւի չի խոսում, հանգիստ կխոսայի:

A: I want to be able to speak normal (laughter). It is very important for me. When I go to my boyfriend's [incorrectly declined] house, his parents are *leninakantsi* (from Leninakan<sup>45</sup>), and if they speak with me I can't answer back [calque] at once. Whatever they say, I'll laugh (laugh). It's really hard for me, uh, and that Armenians have *parskahay* (Iranian-Armenian), *leninakantsi* (from Leninakan), it's awful when two people try to speak with each other. That that part I can't. If he were *parskahay* or if I see that he also uhh doesn't speak in that high way a bit, I would speak comfortably.

<sup>45</sup> Leninakan, the former name of Gyumri, is the second largest city in Armenia, where a Western Armenian dialect is spoken.

[A.K. / Age 19 / F / Birthplace – Abovian, Armenia / Age at immigration– 6 / Parents repatriated from Iran to Armenia]

In the following case, an Eastern Armenian speaker describes her discomfort during interactions with older community members who speak “another” Armenian.

Շ: Ըհըհ: Որտե՞ղ եւ ո՞ւմ հետ ես անհանգիստ զգում, երբ որ հայերեն ես խոսում:  
Պ: (Laugh) Ըը I think խանութներում կամ որ like ուրիշ ազգի հայ են ու ձեզ մի բան են հարցնում like չեմ հասկանում ճիշտ: Like մի անգամ իմ **հորաքույրս** հետ էի գնացել ը cousin-իս նկարը պետք ա frame-ի մեջ դնեի՞նք, ու մարդը հարցնում ա, like ապերի՞կդ է, բայց like չեմ հասկանում, որտեւ ընենց like հայերենը սովոր չէի իրա: So like վատ ես զգում որ չես հասկանում իրանց: So մորքուրը պետք ա գար ասեր: Չետո մտածում ես like վաղը մյուս օր, որ քո երեխաները, բայց like ես կարողանալո՞ւ եմ like իրանց բացատրեմ:

S: Uhuh. Where and with whom do you feel uncomfortable when you speak Armenian?

P: (Laugh) Uh I think in stores or when, **like**, they [the interlocutors] are an Armenian from another nation and they ask you something, **like** I don’t understand it correctly. **Like** once I had gone with my aunt [*declined incorrectly*], uh we needed to **frame** my **cousin’s** [*genitive case marker and possessive suffix added in Armenian*] picture, and the man is asking, **like**, “Is he your brother?” But **like** I don’t understand, ‘cause **like**, I wasn’t used to his kind of Armenian. **So like** you feel bad that you don’t understand them. **So** my aunt had to come and say [it]. And then you think, **like** in the future, when your kids (experience the same thing – *implied*), but **like** am I going to be able to like explain it to them (i.e. clarify the meaning of something like the aunt did for her)?

[P.G./ Age 19/ F / Birthplace – Montebello, CA / Parents from Yerevan, Armenia]

This example provides insight into the range of emotions experienced by the speaker, beginning with the acknowledgment that the interlocutor is speaking Armenian, followed by the embarrassment associated with not understanding the seemingly simple input from an older person and resorting to comprehension repair from the aunt, and concluding with concerns about how future generations will deal with this type of communication breakdown.

As evidenced by the examples above, fears and anxieties connected with performing up to par in the heritage language, whether with more competent interlocutors or those who speak another variety press heritage speakers either to avoid interactions in the heritage language or

seek for the quickest opportunity to switch to English. As one speaker formulated, all the unease associated with interacting in Armenian leads to the following typical outcome:

Ըմ եթե շատ մարդ կա usually անգլերեն ա: Չեմ մանում ինչու միշտ տենց ա ստացվում, որ մի էրկու հոգուց ավել ա անգլերեն ա ստացվում խոսանք:

Um if there are a lot of people, it [the language of interaction] is **usually** English. I don't know why, it always turns out like that, when there are more than two people, it turns out that we speak English.

*[A.H. / Age 19 / F / Birthplace – Yerevan, Armenia /Age at immigration- 8]*

Ultimately, in interactions with two or more participants, due to differences in proficiency levels and/or varieties, English functions as the common denominator, resulting in a group of Armenian-speaking Armenians choosing to speak in English for better comprehension and social ease.

### **Internalized Incompetence and Desire for Normalcy**

In the analysis of speakers' emotional and psychological state during interactions in the heritage language, what stands out is the relentless sense of unease over being criticized and judged. For many heritage speakers, interactions in Armenian, especially with better skilled speakers, function like an endless guessing game in which they are persistently in fear of being caught. The energy and effort required for constant monitoring, both of the interlocutor's proficiency and impending judgment, in addition to one's own perceived and/or real imminent errors and failure, take a daunting toll on speakers' self-confidence, motivation, and desire to pursue future interactions. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that in almost every single interview, speakers prefaced their comments and narratives with an unprovoked acknowledgement of their "bad / poor / lacking / broken / backward / illiterate / childlike /

unsophisticated” Armenian and subsequent apologies for their mistakes as a manner of protecting themselves from the anticipated judgment and criticism.

Furthermore, this internalized sense of lacking competence and ability among heritage speakers creates a pronounced aspiration for normalcy, automaticity, propriety, fluency, and ease in the heritage language. As the examples below convey, respondents long not to stand out for their marked inability as *awkward, funny, someone with an accent, or someone who stutters and stumbles*, but instead to effortlessly fit in as a fully *normal* and competent speaker.

Շ: Ok: Ո՞ր մեկը կուզենայիր ամենաշատը զարգացնելի:

Ջ: Խոսալս:

Շ: Ok. Ինչո՞ւ:

Ջ: Ըմմ որ եթե, even though literate չըլնեի, մարդիկ իմանային որ կարող եմ խոսամ ըմմ ու հայերենս, like they wouldn’t be able to detect like an accent or anything:

S: **Ok.** Which one would you like to improve most?

G: My speaking.

S: **Ok.** Why?

G: Umm so that, **even though** I wouldn’t be **literate**, people would know that I can talk umm and my Armenian, **like they wouldn’t be able to detect like an accent or anything.**

[G.K. / Age 21 / F / Birthplace – Yerevan, Armenia / Age at immigration– 10 months]

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Շ: Ok: Ըմմ քեզ համար կարեւո՞ր է հայերեն իմանալը:

Ա: Այո:

Շ: Ի՞նչու:

Ա: Մարդկանց հետ որ շփվում եմ, կարենամ հետները նորմալ խոսամ, իրար հասկանանք, Հայաստան գնալուց *awkward* չլինի, տարօրինակ չլինի: Um yeah...

S: **Ok.** Umm is it important for you to know Armenian?

A: Yes.

S: Why?

A: So that when I interact with people, I can speak with them normally, so that we can understand each other, so that it won’t be **awkward** when I go to Armenia, it won’t be strange. **Um yeah...**

[A.F. / Age 19 / M / Birthplace – Burbank, CA / Father born in Armenia / Mother born in Aleppo, Syria, repatriated to Armenia at age 16 before moving to U.S.]

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Շ: Ok: Այդ չորսից, ամենաշատը ո՞րը կուզենայիր զարգացնել:

Լ: Խոսել:

Շ: Ok. Ինչո՞ւ:

Լ: Որտեւ չեմ (laugh), ըմ չեմ, որ մեկի հետ խոսում եմ ու ինձ չեն ճանա(ն)չում կամ չեմ ուզում like վախ վախենալով խոսալ: Ուզում եմ... հետո չեմ ուզում... I don't wanna sound funny.

S: **Ok.** From those four, which one would you want to improve most?

L: Speaking.

S: **Ok.** Why?

L: 'Cause I don't (laugh), um I don't, when I speak to someone and they don't know me or I don't want to **like** sca...speak scared. I want to...and I don't want to... **I don't wanna sound funny.**

[L.A. / Age 20 / F / Birthplace – Glendale, CA / Parents repatriated to Armenia from Iran]

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Շ: Ok: Այս չորսից, ո՞րը կուզենայիր զարգացնելիք ամենաշատը:

Թ: Խոսել:

Շ: Խոսել: Ինչո՞ւ:

Թ: Անկեղծորեն որովհետեւ երեխայի նման եմ խոսում (laughter): Որտեւ ըը stutter, stumble, չեմ կարողանում սահուն խոսամ even though կարող եմ հասկանալ սահուն (ըհըհ) հիմա:

S: **Ok.** From these four, which one would you want to improve most?

T: My speaking.

S: Your speaking. Why?

T: Honestly, because I speak like a child (laughter). 'Cause uh **stutter, stumble**, I can't speak fluently **even though** I can understand fluently (uhuh) now.

[T.Y. / Age 21 / F / Birthplace – Yerevan, Armenia / Age at immigration– 1 year 8 months]

Quite parallel to the situation Carreira describes for US Hispanics (2000), standard Armenian remains as a desired but often unachievable goal, while the heritage variety functions as a



defective reality, leaving heritage speakers in the pressure-filled crack between the distant ideal and the devalorized actuality.

## **Conclusion**

As demonstrated in this chapter, teasing, ridicule, error-correction and criticism may lead to debilitating fears and anxieties linked with impending failure during interactions in the heritage language. This process raises the speakers' affective filters that block the comprehensive input received, and more harmfully, reduces the desire for seeking interactions with more competent speakers. As a result, in order not to risk criticism and harsh judgment heritage speakers either avoid interactions in Armenian or prefer to switch to English, reducing the possibility of attaining a high quality and quantity of comprehensive input and further development of their ability in the heritage language.

The largest contributing factor to breaking this destructive cycle involves changing people's attitudes about the processes involved in the acquisition and development of language. Although speakers of any language have very high standards for language and strong feelings about correctness (Finegan 1980 cited in Krashen 1998), educating HL students and community members about the natural varieties of languages, the ineffectiveness of error correction, and the critical role of comprehensible input can serve as foundational steps. Scholars have repeatedly demonstrated that language learning and development cannot succeed in situations that damage the linguistic self-esteem of learners (Carreira 2000; Brown 1994; Krashen 1998; Tse 1998). Therefore, raising community awareness in order to "persuade stronger HL speakers not to ridicule or correct, but to tolerate weak HL speakers' errors, and to encourage interaction in the HL" (Krashen 1998: 46) can serve as productive means of developing the competence of heritage speakers.

## CHAPTER 6

### “HOW CAN I TEACH MY KIDS MY BROKEN ARMENIAN?”: DIVERGENT

#### LANGUAGE ATTITUDES AND COMPETING IDEOLOGIES

##### Introduction

“Across a range of social science disciplines and wide variety of contexts, a common paradox that arises in studies of attitudes and behaviors is that there are often fundamental differences between individuals’ expressed attitudes towards an object and their actual behavior surrounding that object” (King 2000: 167).

This chapter considers the inconsistent attitudes and beliefs that heritage speakers hold and are socialized into about Armenian. On the one hand they express extremely elevated and positive sentiments about their heritage language comprised of various affective components, all of which highlight the intrinsic role of the Armenian language in the construction, preservation, and perpetuation of Armenian identity, while on the other hand, they hold views and depict behaviors that devalue Armenian as an instrumental and useful tool. These divergent attitudes are explored with an examination of the impact of competing majority and minority language ideologies. While in the U.S., a language ideology of monolingualism dominates, Armenian diasporic ideologies fracture along multiple lines, often depending on the interchange between the prevailing ideology of the host countries and the particular circumstances of the local Armenian community. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the inherent contradictions between the internalized elevated sentiments and the unparalleled lower proficiency as a result of negative attitudes and behaviors, which lead to a state of cognitive dissonance among speakers.

This type of discrepancy between language attitudes and the accompanying language behavior is quite prevalent in sociolinguistic literature about different languages. Five decades ago, Joshua Fishman, in his study of U.S. immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe, observed a negative correlation between positive language attitudes and the real life use of the

language (1964). Sociolinguistic studies of the Irish (Benton 1986) and the Welsh (Lyon & Elis 1991) have found that despite holding high opinions of their language and its symbolic value for the nation, few individuals were willing to speak the language regularly and use it consistently with their children. King (2000) in her analysis of two Quichua/Spanish communities in Ecuador discovers that although parents give great importance to the Quichua language, they also display negative attitudes and behaviors in which the heritage language is viewed as subordinate and cumbersome to the process of learning the dominant language. The same dilemma is described by Garcia Bedolla for the Latino community in the U.S. where “Spanish remains a source of ethnic pride and solidarity, yet is seen as an obstacle to socioeconomic and social mobility” (2003: 266). In sum, it seems common for minority community members to underscore the ideal importance of the heritage language yet concomitantly not promote the actual usage of the language in daily life.

### **Language Ideologies**

In order to proceed language ideology and language attitude must first be clearly defined and delineated. Part of the distinction between the two terms rests on the different “traditions in research, theory, and expression” (Baker 1992:14). As King (2010:168) clarifies, “while much of the research on language attitudes is embedded within the field of social psychology (e.g. Gardner 1985; Gardner & Lambert 1972), studies of language ideology tend to be linked with sociology and anthropology (e.g. Rumsey 1990; Schieffelin et al. 1998; Silverstein 1979).” Typically, an attitude is directed towards a particular object (King 2010) and can be defined as a ‘disposition to respond favorably or unfavorably to an object, person, institution, or event’ (Azjen 1988:4; in Baker 1992:11). Ideology, on the other hand, indicates a larger system of beliefs, norms, or values. Irvine (1989) defines language ideology as “the cultural (and sub-

cultural) system of ideas about social and linguistic relationships, together with their loading of moral and political interests” (255). Language ideologies act as interpretive links between a sociocultural context and linguistic forms and resources (e.g. Kroskrity 2004), shaping the understanding, evaluation, and deployment of these forms and resources, from basic linguistic foci such as vocabulary choice (Silverstein 1998) to wider social and political foci such as the hierarchical ordering of languages and dialects within a community (e.g. Lippi-Green 1997). “Thus, while a language attitude is usually conceived of as a specific response to certain aspects of a particular language, language ideology, in contrast, is a set of beliefs concerning a particular language, or possibly language in general” (King 2010:168).

Irvine (1989) further notes that language ideologies are laden with the moral and political interests of dominant cultural systems as well as those espoused by subcultures, and while those of the dominant group often assume hegemonic status and are supported by powerful institutions such as schools and media (Lippi-Green 1994), language ideologies that reflect the experiences of subordinate groups are also important and can provide a counterpoint to dominant ones. It is essential in this discussion to consider the language ideologies of both the majority and minority speech communities and how their conflicting goals influence the attitudes and behaviors of minority speech community members.

#### *Western/U.S. Language Ideologies*

Dorian (1998) demonstrates that the power of language ideology, particularly Western language ideology, affects how minorities view their heritage languages, specifically the level of prestige and loyalty these speakers feel for their own mother tongue. According to her, Western ideology consists of a related system of beliefs based on three central premises: 1) certainty that bilingualism is onerous; 2) contempt for subordinated, non-standardized languages; and 3) social

Darwinism of language, or a linguistic ‘survival of the fittest’ which has encouraged Europeans to ‘assume a correlation between adaptive and expressive capacity in a language and the language’s survival and spread’ (1998:10). Similarly, in the U.S. a dominant ideology of monolingualism is prevalent, coupled with the fact that bi- and multilingualism have traditionally been looked down upon (Avineri 2012). Additionally, Silverstein (1996)’s discussion of “monoglot standard,” an ideology of one nation-state with one homogenous language, pervasive in the U.S., generally dismisses multilingualism. Thus the predominant message conveyed by American language ideologies, typically delivered through the educational system to minority populations relates that “English is more prestigious than any other language and that social acceptance, employment, and upward mobility is within reach upon speaking the language of the dominant culture” (Galindo 1995: 88).

#### *Armenian Diasporic Language Ideologies*

Although dispersion has been an endemic constituent of Armenian history, the bulk of the Armenian diasporic communities were formed after the 1915 Genocide, with two-thirds of the worldwide Armenian population currently living outside of the Republic of Armenia<sup>46</sup>. Since then, the impact of dispersal, settlement in host countries, and the dominant majority languages on the status of the Armenian language and the linguistic and attitudinal behavior of the Armenian community members has been tremendous (Jebejian 2012). Consequently, Armenian has continuously functioned in a bi- or multilingual environment (Cowe 1992), a factor that has undoubtedly shaped the language ideologies of the various communities. Even during the seventy years of the Soviet rule (1922-1991), although Armenian was recognized as the official

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<sup>46</sup> The small territory that now comprises the Republic of Armenia is not the ancestral homeland of many Diaspora Armenians who are descendants of survivors from historic Western Armenia, the territories of which are now mostly in Eastern Turkey.

first language of the Soviet Republic of Armenia, Russian dominated in the higher social spheres, as proficiency in Russian was an essential vehicle for upward mobility in the Communist system (Cowe 1992; Bakalian 1993). In sum, language ideologies about Armenian have largely depended on the interplay between the mainstream ideology of the host country and the goals and attitudes of the local Armenian community.

The Armenian communities in the Middle East for example, particularly in the first three quarters of the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>47</sup>, encountered much more favorable conditions for heritage language maintenance in their particular historical contexts and extralinguistic environments. Jebejian (2010) presents a thorough investigation of the patterns of language use for over 95 years among the Armenians of Lebanon, proclaimed as the “second Armenia” and “most Armenian” of all diaspora communities for a long time. The patterns of language use following the survivors’ initial settlement in Lebanon were quite unique. In the early and well into the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century most Armenians spoke several languages: Turkish, Kurdish, Armenian, as well as village dialects, with older interviewees in Jebejian’s study testifying that Turkish was widely spoken by their parents and grandparents. However, out of a need to disassociate themselves from the Turkish perpetrators and a strong belief that “the Armenian school is the only salvation of the Armenian nation,” parents made a major point of sending their children to Armenian schools, ensuring Armenian fluency and use among the next generation (Jebejian 2010:459; *Ajemian* 2014). As one of Jebejian’s interviewees explained:

My father did not speak Armenian. But that did not stop him from volunteering to build a tin-roofed school in the neighborhood for teaching Armenian language and history. He

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<sup>47</sup> During the last few decades, the dwindling of these communities as a result of civil unrest, wars, and emigration, has impacted the robustness of the Armenian language, in addition to generational disparities in language attitudes and language use patterns.

had lost his family and lands and had had enough of Turkish. It was too late for him to learn Armenian, but I could see his determination to make his children learn it. For him, learning Armenian meant defeating the enemy who had killed his father and uncles (2010: 459).

Several other important factors influenced the delayed acquisition of Arabic and the flourishing of Armenian at this time among the Armenians in Lebanon. The power of the Lebanese government was disputable as it was a French mandate until 1943 and thus the prestige of Arabic was contested, with French functioning as the official language of the mandate. Therefore, in addition to the Armenian language, Armenians opted for the socially more prestigious Western languages, especially French and English, before they spoke Arabic (Bakalian 1993). Although the school curricula included Arabic, Armenians made no effort to learn it so that their poor knowledge and restricted use of Arabic further limited their need or use of the language. An extremely significant factor in the language maintenance efforts of this community was the establishment of the Armenian press in Lebanon, which included multiple daily newspapers, dozens of monthly and quarterly literary journals, in-house magazines and newsletters of organizations, churches, schools, and centers (Jebejian 2010). Finally, the insular and closeknit milieus that Armenians occupied in Lebanon, particularly in heavily Armenian populated areas such as Bourj Hammoud, complete with their churches, schools, community clubs, and marketplaces (Jebejian 2010) created a favorable environment for the maintenance and fully functional use of Armenian.

By contrast, the younger participants in Jebejian's study, many of whom had opted to leave the local community for opportunities of social mobility, reported an overwhelming increase in their preference and more frequent use of Arabic, French, and English in their daily

interactions, with Armenian mostly restricted to the home. Arabic, now having gained official status and prestige, and to a certain extent English and French, dominate the media, politics, economy, school, administration and other domains, unlike Armenian which is limited to being used exclusively with the speech community (Jebejian 2010). As can be seen in the case of Lebanese-Armenians, factors such as utility and acceptance of multilingualism, the prestige and loyalty toward the various languages present in the community, reactions to external sociopolitical developments, and generational shift in attitudes and language use patterns all shape the ideologies and behaviors of the minority community.

#### *Armenian-Americans*

In her monograph *Armenian-Americans: From Being to Feeling Armenian* (1993), the most comprehensive study of Armenians in the U.S. to date, Anny Bakalian considers the assimilation of people of Armenian descent in America and their continued pride in and identification with their ethnic heritage. Although her results are largely based on participants in metropolitan New York and New Jersey and her data was collected nearly thirty years ago, some of her observations are still relevant. In her chapter dedicated to language, Bakalian confirms an American language ideology that mandates English proficiency as a prerequisite for success, social mobility, and achieving the American dream. The Armenian immigrants in the U.S., particularly those who arrived before the ethnic revival movement, have encountered a larger American society that does not explicitly discourage bilingualism, but imposes cultural policies that do not support bilingualism or multilingualism. “In sum living in America is clearly not conducive to Armenian proficiency ... since ethnic languages, including Armenian, cannot successfully compete with the American Dream” (Bakalian 1993: 258).



As for the debate on the role of the Armenian language in the Armenian-American community, Bakalian explains that language ideologies and attitudes essentially depend on how Armenianness is defined.

“How can you be an Armenian if you do not speak Armenian? What kind of an Armenian are you?” With such callous remarks, foreign-born Armenians often reproach American-born Armenians. Indeed, these provocative accusations sum up the conflict between two definitions of Armenianness: the traditional and the symbolic. Traditional Armenianness was defined in this study as a status ascribed by accident of birth. It fosters a compulsive type of identity and unconscious behavior responses. “Being” Armenian can only be sustained in an environment where there are linguistic, religious, and other cultural markers that delineate the boundaries between Armenians and odars [foreigners/non-Armenians]. Symbolic Armenianness was defined as voluntary, rational choice in identity maintenance. It tends to elicit a situational, emotional, personalized response toward one’s ancestral language. It is not dependent on knowledge or practice of language and culture to survive. Rather, it is contingent on its effectiveness in fulfilling social-psychological functions for the individual and on the larger society’s tolerance of ethnic differences (Bakalian 1993:251)

Due to the influx of Armenian immigrants in the late 1980s and 1990s, significant proportions of Armenians born and raised in the Middle East or in Soviet Armenia who conceived of their Armenian identity in traditional terms as an ascribed status encountered American-born Armenians whose Armenianness had evolved over the decades to become symbolic in form and substance. Bakalian demonstrates that generation is the most significant variable in terms of where Armenian-Americans stand on the continuum between the traditional and symbolic

definition of Armenianness as well as their language retention. The longer the generational presence, the lower the proportion of people of Armenian descent who can speak, read, or write Armenian and who believe that one must speak Armenian to be Armenian.

Similarly, in his survey of 3,400 Armenians born and raised in New England, Bert Vaux (1999) delineates the factors that have been involved in the decline of the Armenian language in this community, as well as those that have played a part in keeping it from disappearing entirely. Members of this community take two opposing positions on the issue of maintaining Armenian in the U.S.:

1. On one side, populated primarily by Armenians who are older and/or speak the language well, we find the opinion that the link between language and ethnicity is vital – it is the essence of identity, authenticity, and uniqueness. In this line of thinking, the particular structural characteristics of Armenian are believed to cause, lead, force, constrain, and require its speakers to know, do, intuit, appreciate, and resonate the way they do. Armenian is viewed and experienced as a dynamo that generates sensitivities, skills, abilities, and understanding unique to its community of speakers.
2. The other side of the debate is occupied primarily by Americans and thoroughly Americanized Armenians. According to this view, languages are merely means of communication; any links with ethnicity are purely arbitrary. It is therefore possible to remain Armenian (if one wants to) without speaking the language (Vaux 1999: 4).

Analogous to Bakalian's (1993) results, the community investigated by Vaux (1999) espouses divergent ideologies regarding the maintenance and role of the Armenian language in the U.S., ranging from language functioning as the core of ethnic identity to playing a symbolic arbitrary role.

### *Los Angeles Community*

Although both Bakalian (1993) and Vaux (1999) forecast that the development of a large and growing Armenian community in Los Angeles might be the exception to the well-established pattern described above, similar tensions appear. This community is indeed somewhat unusual in its conglomeration of Armenians of different generations and from different origins, in addition to the continuous influx of immigration, mainly from Armenia and Iran. Various populations comprise this community: more recently, Lebanese-Armenians, Iranian-Armenians, and Armenians from the Republic of Armenia. Far from being a homogenous entity, these various subethnic groups come from very different sociolinguistic backgrounds, yet face similar challenges in reconciling with dominant U.S. language ideologies.

Lebanese- and Iranian-Armenians led a *marked* Armenian existence in their previous host countries where they lived as ethnic, religious, and linguistic minorities. The main characteristic these two subgroups share is their previous experience as a minority population, where issues of language maintenance, identity preservation, and assimilation were explicitly visible. In the process of settling in the U.S., they transitioned from one minority status to another, albeit in very different conditions. Therefore, they arrived to their new host country equipped to some degree with the understanding, skills, resources, and outlook of living as a minority population. For example, it is not surprising that most of the Armenian schools, churches, and cultural organizations in this community are founded, supported, and directed by members of second Diasporas. In opposition, the Armenians from Armenia represent the only subgroup transitioning from a majority status to a minority one. Naturally, the Armenians from Armenia have led a very *unmarked* Armenian existence, without experiencing, much less acknowledging impending concerns of ethnic or linguistic assimilation. They are oblivious to ideas of identity and language

preservation as these are taken for granted in an environment where one is accustomed to living in one's own homeland. As a result, members of this subethnic group are often less prepared for their change to a minority status and the complications that process entails.

Although the subgroups that comprise the Los Angeles Armenian community come from distinctly different backgrounds, the path to linguistic decline becomes inevitable over the course of a few generations, as none of the groups is prepared for the unfavorable linguistic environment in the U.S. However, due to the active inflow of immigrants, the same tensions noted by Bakalian (1993) and Vaux (1999) surface between more recently arrived foreign-born Armenians and American-born Armenians. Conflicting ideas of Armenianness and the role of language in that construction are widely debated in this community. With the passing of generations and the predictable decline of linguistic proficiency that goes along with it, second and third generation Armenian-Americans have retreated to formulating a more flexible delineation of what it means to be Armenian, a definition which like Bakalian's symbolic Armenianness, downplays the role of language. Qualities such as activism in the Armenian community and fighting for the Armenian cause, which mainly revolve around Genocide recognition and assistance to the Republic of Armenia, are highlighted and encouraged (Kouloujian 2012). Furthermore, in the case of the Armenian community schools in the Los Angeles community, the visible failure to produce graduates who are proficient in Armenian has led to mission statements de-emphasizing linguistic competence and instead accentuating goals such as "developing a strong sense of national and spiritual values," providing an "Armenian upbringing," and instilling a motivation and inspiration "to be actively involved in the pursuit of the Armenian cause"<sup>48</sup> (Karapetian 2013). This symbolic Armenianness, which encompasses

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<sup>48</sup> Full mission statement of the Western Prelacy Schools available at [<http://westernprelacy.org/schools/>].

great pride in Armenian heritage but at the same time is often devoid of linguistic competence, comes as a shock to first generation Armenian immigrants, both from Armenia and the Middle East, who view ethnicity as an ascribed status in which language is a fundamental component.

### **Language and Identity**

Indeed, in addition to serving as a means of communication, a language comes to index an ethnicity as ideologies of language connect the language in question with the identity of a particular group or speaker (e.g. Kroskrity 2004; Lippi-Green 1997; Silverstein 1998). In discussing the connections between language and identity, researchers in the areas of second language acquisition, language studies, and heritage language education highlight that identity is dynamic and socially constructed (e.g. Achugar 2006; Norton 2000; Valdés 2001; Wallace 2004) as well as negotiated in discourse and thus influenced by language, which serves as the medium for its negotiation (Beltz 2002; Ros i Sole 2004; Warschauer 2000). Identity is described as a process of identifying or not identifying with a particular position in life and continually negotiating and modifying this position and attitudes toward it (Crawshaw, Callen, & Tusting 2001; Hall & du Gay 1996). It must be stressed that one belongs to a number of social categories based on gender, ethnicity, nationality, cultural heritage, age, occupation, social status, etc. and moves among multiple identity positions in different social contexts (Berard 2005; Warschauer 2000). “Thus, identity is a ‘process of association and opposition’ (Achugar, 2006, p.100) and of constant negotiation, production and performance (Crawshaw et al., 2001) rather than a static category of possession” (Val and Vinogradova 2010: 1).

Identities are often linguistically constructed and negotiated because the connection between identity and language is “an intimate and mutually constructive relation” (Beltz 2002: 16), especially since language has important symbolic value (Wei 2000) and plays a crucial role

in establishing one's place and role in society (Djite 2006). Researchers view language not only as the medium of identity negotiation, but also as the source of identity interpretation (Warschauer 2000). Speakers of more than one language, including heritage language speakers, navigate within and among different language communities and thus negotiate their own identities in connection to these different languages and their power relations and social distributions in society. Thus, "the identity of heritage language speakers is co-constructed and contextualized as they maintain and build connections with both or multiple languages and cultures" (Val and Vinogradova 2010: 3).

### **Elevated Attitudes about Armenian Language**

Turning now to the interview data, it is necessary to consider the demographic composition of the participants in this study and how that may impact their attitudes. The heritage speakers interviewed were the children of first generation immigrants, who were either born in the U.S. (second generation immigrants) or arrived at a young age (1.5 generation). Most families emigrated from Armenia, including some who had initially repatriated to Armenia from the Middle East, as well as some families who emigrated directly from Iran. Although these subgroups come from very different backgrounds, they all converge on extremely elevated ideologies about the Armenian language based on a very robust link between language and identity. Whether these ideologies are taken for granted but reflexively articulated, as in the case of the Armenians from Armenia, or a conscious element of daily existence, as in the case of the Armenians from the Middle East, the interviews with heritage speakers demonstrate that they are extremely vital and clearly transmitted. Additionally, interchange between the ideologies of various subgroups and the influence of larger diasporic ideologies must also be considered. For example, themes such as the tenuous condition of a diasporic existence and the moral obligation

of cultural preservation function as integral markers of a collective diasporic identity. Although these are typically not as prevalent or marked in the Republic of Armenia, where Armenians enjoy majority status and naturally experience no need for preservation, as will be demonstrated below, the children of immigrants from the Republic of Armenia are quite impacted by these factors, indicating a strong degree of intersection between the various subgroups under the umbrella of larger diasporic ideologies.

For heritage speakers, several prominent affective elements emerged in connection with the significance and value of knowing the Armenian language, all indicating the undeniable link between language and identity and the integral function of language as a central vehicle of cultural preservation and transmission. The delicate nature of Armenian existence in a diasporic setting with a small worldwide population recurrently stood out as the source for a need to claim and take ownership of their heritage and language. As a result, heritage speakers have internalized a moral responsibility for cultural preservation accompanied by a concurrent fear of loss of this heritage in light of the visible assimilation they witness around them. Often in speakers' narratives, these moral obligations and fears are communicated and mediated through parents and grandparents, highlighting the active socialization process. Similar findings were present in Ani Yazedjian's (2008) study of the process of ethnic identity development for Armenian adolescents, in which important cultural markers such as the Diaspora, cultural preservation, and language were viewed as tools for cultural transmission employed by socializing agents in the community<sup>49</sup>. In sum, the sentiments gleaned from heritage speakers' interviews echo the contention that "the survival of Armenian culture and identity is closely

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<sup>49</sup> Yazedjian's (2008) study was conducted in an urban area in the Midwest with 33 participants of ages 11-16. Her methods included participant observation in community events, as well as informal interviews and focus groups with adolescents.

linked to the survival of the Armenian language. The language plays a central role in delineating Armenian national identity, as distinct from the identities of the nations among which Armenians are now required to live. If the language is not passed on from generation to generation, total assimilations is sure to follow. Without the language, the culture and the nation eventually die” (Vaux 1999: 7).

The following selection of quotes highlights speakers’ awareness of Armenians as a small people and the Armenian language as անսեր/without an owner, which entails an obligation to claim and preserve it.

Մենք որպես ազգ քիչվոր ենք, ոչ միայն ը Միացյալ Նահանգներում կամ Լոս Անջելեսում այլ ամողջ աշխարհով մեկ, թեկուզ մայրենիքում:

As a nation we are few, not only uh in the United States or Los Angeles, but all around the world, even in the homeland.

*[N.S. / Age 22 / M / Birthplace – Gyumri, Armenia / Age of arrival – 3.5]*

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Շ: Ըմմ քեզ համար կարեւո՞ր է հայերեն իմանալը:

Ա: Այո:

Շ: Ինչո՞ւ:

Ա: Ինչո՞ւ: Որտեւ մենք չիմանանք, ո՞վ պետք ա իմանա:

S: Um is it important for you to know Armenian?

A: Yes.

S: Why?

A: Why? 'Cause if we don't know, who should know it?

*[A.K. / Age 19 / F / Birthplace – Abovian, Armenia / Age of arrival – 6 / Parents repatriated from Iran to Armenia]*

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Կարծում եմ շատ էտի ըմմ I don't know, it's important: Մենք մեծ հո, մեծ մարդ չենք, you know, հայ հայերս շատ քիչ եթե համ համարով ենք խոսում, շատ չենք: Եւ շատ, շատ պետք ա որ մենք ըր մեր մեր քույրուոր, մեր պատմությունը, մեր լեզուն պահենք, սովորենք, մեր երեխաներին սովորացնենք: Որովհետեւ եթե մենք չանենք, ո՞վ ա անելու, կփոքրանա, կփոքրանա: I mean փոքր քույրս չէր



կարող, you know մի հատ ըր բանաստ բանաստեղծություն կարդար կամ մի հատ ըմ մի քանի հատ բառ դներ որ խոսեր մեկի հետ: Եւ էտի իմ համար ցավացնում էր, բայց ես նկատեցի որ ես էլ նույնն եմ, եւ դեռ նույնն եմ you know: So ըմ մեր մեր ըր ձեռքերի մեջ ա, մենք պետք ա անենք:

I think that's really um **I don't know, it's important**. We big, we are not a big people [*uses singular noun "person," instead of "people"*], **you know**, Armenian, we Armenians are very few, if num.. we are speaking with number, we are not many. And very, it's very necessary that we uh keep our our culture, our history, we keep our language, learn it, teach it to our children. Because if we don't do it, who is going to do it? It'll shrink, shrink. **I mean** my younger sister couldn't even, **you know**, read a single uh poem or a single uh put a few words together so she would talk to someone. And that hurts for [*inappropriate postposition use*] me, but I noticed that I am also the same, and still the same **you know**. So um it's in um our our hands, we need to do it.

[A.A. / Age 22 / F / Birthplace – Pasadena, CA / Father born in Tehran, Iran / Mother born in Yerevan, Armenia]

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Ըմ որովհետեւ ոնց որ ասեցի ըմ երեւի ամենադժվար բանը մեր ծնողների եւ պապերի համար ըմ էն ա որ ըմ էս ներ ներգաղթելու պատճառով շատերս ոնց որ ըմ մեր տրադիցիաները կորցնում ենք եւ ը ամենակարեւորը դրանցից երեւի լեզուն է որտեւ եթե լեզուն չիմանաս շատ բաներ կա որ չես հասկանա: Ըմ like օրինակ՝ ըմ ճիշտ ա ես շատ չեմ կարդում երեւի հայկական գործեր որտեւ շատ դժվար ա իմ համար բայց էլի որ ըմ մ մի կարդում ես ոնց որ հասկանում ես ինչ որ մի տեղ որտեղից ենք գալի(ս) մենք, ը ու ո՞նց կարաս առանց լեզուն իմանալով մեկի ոնց որ culture-ը հասկանաս, ինձ թվում ա շատ դժվար ա:

Um because like I said um probably the hardest thing for our parents and grandparents um is that um because of immigration many of us are like um losing our traditions and um the most important of those is probably language 'cause if you don't know the language there are a lot of things that you won't understand. Um **like** for example um it's true that I probably don't read a lot of Armenian works 'cause it's really hard for me, but still when um you read, it's like you understand somehow where we come from, uh and how can you understand someone's **culture** without knowing the language, it seems to me it's really hard.

[S.V. / Age 21 / F / Birthplace – Yerevan, Armenia / Age of arrival – 4 months]

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Պապիկս ըմմ մահացավ մի երեք չորս տարի առաջ եւ ինքն էր որ ըր էդ Մարտիկի երգը ու ամեն ինչը երգում էր: Եւ ինք իրա համար միշտ միշտ ըր հայ հայությունը պահելը շատ շատ լուրջ հարց էր իրա համար, որովհետեւ ինքը

վախենում էր որ իմ մամաս կորցրեց, որովհետեւ ի շատ ջահել էր որ էկավ շատ ըը ամերկացի մեկին քթավ եւ you know, he drummer էր like, հա հայ էսենց բան չկար, so իրա համար although մամաս շատ լավ հայերեն ա խոսում, գրում, կարդում ա, բայց իրա համար վախ կար եւ ըմ ու հույ հույս ունեի որ երբ ինքը **դէ՞** ստեղ էր so ցույց տայի որ նայի կարող եմ եւ էլ մի քիչ ըտենց մի բան անեմ, բայց it's ok, գիտեմ որ ինքը մի տեղ տեսնում ա so ինքը ուրախ ա, բայց այն մեծ մամայիս համար էլ շատ էտի շատ imp ըմ մեծ մի բան ա:

My grandpa um died three or four years ago and it was he who uh would sing the Soldier's song<sup>50</sup> and everything. And he, for him, always always uh preserving Armenian Armenianness was a very very serious issue for him because he was scared that my mom lost it, because she came here when she was very young and uh found someone who was very uh American and **you know, he** was a **drummer, like**, there wasn't anything Arm, Armenian, so for him **although** my mom speaks Armenian really well, writes, reads, but for him there was a fear and um and I had a ho hope that when he was still here so to show him that look I can do something a little like that, **but it's ok**, I know that he sees it somewhere so he's happy, but yes for my grandma too that's a very **imp** um big thing.

*[A.A. / Age 22 / F / Birthplace – Pasadena, CA / Father born in Tehran, Iran / Mother born in Yerevan, Armenia]*

Շ: Ok: Կարեւո՞ր է քեզ համար հայերեն իմանալ:

Է: Այո:

Շ: Ինչո՞ւ:

Է: Ըմ որ I mean, հմ, որ հայկական լեզուն էլ you know, չ չմեռնի like just you know եւ ազգության շատ կարեւոր մաս ա I think:

S: **Ok**: Is it important for you to know Armenian?

E: Yes.

S: Why?

E: Umm so that **I mean**, hm, so that the Armenian language also **you know**, doesn't die **like just you know** and it's a really big part of ethnicity **I think**.

*[E.M. / Age 20 / F / Birthplace – Glendale, CA / Parents from Tehran, Iran]*

In addition to the need to claim the Armenian language, the presence of multiple generations in this community provides a window into the evident loss that comes with the passing of time in the American setting. For heritage speakers, the original fear of loss is accentuated by the

<sup>50</sup> This is a popular Armenian song about a soldier longing to be home and see his mother.

noticeable linguistic decline in the language of their peers and younger community members, as well as the consequences of interethnic marriages. Unlike the Armenian communities in the Middle East for example, interethnic or inter-religious marriages are not frowned upon by the larger society in the U.S. and not as severely discouraged by the local Armenian community, as these are becoming more common among second and third generation Armenian-Americans. Speakers recognize that in these situations, children are not immersed in an entirely Armenian-speaking environment and have lower chances of maintaining their language. Furthermore, the function of language as the primary channel of communication with elders and the painful loss of that intergenerational link as a result of linguistic loss is articulated.

Առաջ չգիտեմ ինչի ես միշտ մտածում եմ like իմ երեխաների մասին like ինչ կուզենայի իմ երեխաներին սովորացնելի, I think ըր like կարելուր ա որ մեր հայերենը I don't know preserve it I guess ու like վախենալու ա, որտեւ մեր տարիքի երեխաները շատ չգիտեն, so it's like իրանց երեխաները ինչ պետք ա էղնեն like I don't know, it's a scary thought:

First I don't know why I always think **like** about my kids **like** what would I like to teach my kids, **I think** uh **like** it's important that we **I don't know preserve it I guess**, our Armenian and **like** it's scary, 'cause kids our age don't know it well, **so it's like** what are their kids gonna be, **like I don't know, it's a scary thought**.

*[P.G. / Age 19 / F / Birthplace – Montobello, CA / Parents from Yerevan, Armenia]*

Գնալով ավելի ավելի տենց կորում ա էլի լեզուն, հիմա մեր ծնողները լավ են հասկանում, մենք իրանցից մի քիչ ավելի քիչ, հետո մեր երեխեքը ավելի քիչ, շուտով չեմ մանում ինչ կըլնի, կկորի: Ավելի ըր, գոնե գոնե ծնողներիս չափ իմանամ, եթե կարամ՝ ավելի շատ որ հետո իմ որդիները (laughter), չեմ մանում երեխաներ որ լավ կլիներ բայց իրանք էլ որ լավ հասկանան հետո իրանց որդիները եւ այլը եւ այլը:

With time the language is disappearing more and more, now our parents understand it well, we - a bit less than them, then our kids even less, soon I don't know what will happen, it'll be lost. More so uh, at least at least if I know as much as my parents, if I can, more so so that later my sons [*uses literary term*] (laughter), I don't know maybe kids

would be better, but so that they understand it well, and then their sons and so on and so on.

[V.A. / Age 21 / M / Birthplace – Yerevan, Armenia / Age of arrival - 1]

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Մանավանդ մեր generation, մեր սեր(ու)նդը, շատ մարդիկ արդեն ուրիշ ազգերի հետ են ամուսնանում so forth and մեր լեզուն, our culture and everything is slowly diminishing and I see that happening and ուզում եմ որ ինչքան կարողանում եմ ըմբ պաշտպանեմ, որ է ես, at least իմ ընտանիքի համար:

Especially our **generation**, our generation, a lot of people are already getting married with other ethnicities **so forth and** our language, **our culture and everything is slowly diminishing and** I see that happening and I want to umm defend/protect it as much as I can, so that I I, **at least** for my family.

[S.S. / Age 22 / F / Birthplace – Glendale, CA / Parents repatriated to Armenia from Iran]

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Շ: Քեզ համար կարեւոր է որ ապագա ամուսինդ հայ լինի:

Պ: Ըմ (laugh) I wanna say անպայման է որ հայ լինի only because yeah it's said it's like blind or whatever they say, բայց I mean կարեւոր ա որ դու հանգիստ զգաս իրանց հետ եւ ձեր ընտանիքների հետ like ընտանիքը, especially իմ ընտանիքի մեջ կա, շատ կարեւոր ա, like իմ cousin-ու ըմ օտարի հետ ամուսնացավ եւ շատ ցավալի որ ընտանիքները գալիս են իրար ու իրանք իսպաներեն են խոսում ու իմ ընտանիքը չի հասկանում կամ իմ ընտանիքը հայերեն է խոսում իրանք ընտանիքը like էդ միությունը չկա եւ որ հայի հետ ես ամուսնանում like ամեն ինչ տարբեր ա, ամեն ինչ like ոնց որ քոնն ա ու like իրանց երեխաները ինչ պետք ա սովորեն, like իրանք հայ են հիմա թե like are they իսպաներեն ն like անգլերեն պոի խոսան so it's really confusing ու like երեխաներին էլ են վատ տեղ, վատ բանի մեջ ք(q)ցում, I don't know, it's just ավելի լավ ա որ հայ էլնի (laugh):

S: Is it important for you that your future husband be Armenian?

P: Um (laugh) **I wanna say** it's necessary that he be Armenian **only because yeah it's said it's like blind or whatever they say**, but **I mean** it's important that you feel comfortable with them and with your families, **like** the family, **especially** it's there in my family, it's really important. **Like** my **cousin** [*Armenian possessive suffix added to English noun*] um married a foreigner and it's really painful when the families come together and they speak Spanish and my family doesn't understand or my family speaks Armenian, they the family **like** that unity is not there and when you marry an Armenian **like** everything is different, everything is **like** yours and **like** what are their kids supposed

to learn, **like are they** Armenian now or **like are they** supposed to speak Spanish or English, **so it's really confusing** and **like** the kids are in a bad place, in a bad thing, **I don't know, it's just** better that he (the future husband) be Armenian (laugh).

*[P.G. / Age 19 / F / Birthplace – Montobello, CA / Parents from Yerevan, Armenia]*

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Շ: Ըն եթե երեխաներ ունենաս, հայերեն կսովորեցնե՞ս:

Ա: Այո:

Շ: Ինչո՞ւ:

Ա: Որովհետեւ նույն պատճառներով որ շատ կարելու է որ հասկանան հայերենը, որ որ պահպանվի լեզուն, որ որ չկորի: Հետո որ հայերի հետ կարողանան շփվեն որ կամ կամ մեծերի հետ: Օրինակ՝ ես ընկերուհի ունեմ որ շատ քիչ հայերեն գիտի ու նույնիսկ իրա տատիկի հետ դժվարանում ա շփվելը: Ես երբեք չեմ ուզի որ իմ երեխաները դժվարանան ինչ որ իմ իմ իմ ընտանիքի հետ շփվել կամ ինչ որ մի ուրիշ հայի հետ շփվել:

S: Uh if you have children, will you teach them Armenian?

A: Yes.

S: Why?

A: Because of the same reasons that it's very important that they understand Armenian, so that that the language is preserved, so that that it doesn't disappear. And then so that they can interact with Armenians that, or or with elders. For example, I have a girlfriend who knows very little Armenian and has a hard time interacting even with her grandma. I would never want for my kids to have some kind of difficulties in interacting with my my family or in interacting with another Armenian.

*[A.K. / Age 20 / F / Birthplace – Yerevan, Armenia / Age of arrival - 3]*

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Շ: Ok. Եթե երեխաներ ունենաս, կուզենա՞ս որ իրենք հայերեն իմանան:

Լ: Անպայման, of course.

Շ: Ինչո՞ւ: Ինչո՞ւ ես կարծում կարելու է իրենց համար:

Լ: Որ իմանան իրանք իրանց history-ին, իրանք որ like մեր heritage-ը, իմանան որ մենակ անգլերենը չի, I it is dominant here, it's you know, you need to know it, it's very important, but it's also important to know, you know your mother tongue. I feel that that's very important, it's part of your background, it's part of who you are, and I feel like, I've even with my generation, a lot of us have lost it, so we kind of have to regain it now.

Շ: Ok. Ի՞նչ կանես որ ապահովես որ երեխաներդ հայերեն իմանան:

Լ: Կուզենամ իրանց հայկական դպրոց արձանագրեմ: Ես չեմ, ես չեմ գնացել(լ) բայց կուզեմ որ իրանք գնան: Especiallly իրանց ժամանակ որտեւ չեմ պատկերացնում մի տաս տարի հետո հայերենը ոնց ա լինելու, ինչքան են

հայերեն խոսալու, սկի ես հայերեն ինչքան եմ խոսալու իրանց հետ: Տեսնում եմ իմ զարմիկներս իրանց էրեխեքի հետ, ավելի շատ անգլերեն են խոսում ու կուզեմ որ հայերեն խոսան:

S: **Ok.** If you have children, would you like them to know Armenian?

L: Definitely, **of course.**

S: Why? Why do you think it's important for them?

L: So that they know their **history** [*dative suffix attached to English noun*], so that they know **like** our **heritage** [*definite article attached to English noun*], so that they know it's not only English, **I it is dominant here, it's you know, you need to know it, it's very important, but it's also important to know, you know your mother tongue. I feel that that's very important, it's part of your background, it's part of who you are, and I feel like, I've even with my generation, a lot of us have lost it, so we kind of have to regain it now.**

S: **Ok.** What will you do to ensure that your children know Armenian?

L: I would like to enroll them in Armenian school. I didn't, I didn't go but I would like for them to go. **Especially** during their time 'cause I can't imagine how Armenian is going to be in ten years, how much Armenian they're going to speak, even how much Armenian I am going to speak with them. I see my cousins with their kids, they speak more English and I would like to speak Armenian.

[L.A. / Age 20 / F / Birthplace – Glendale, CA / Parents repatriated to Armenia from Iran]

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Շ: Երբ որ երեխաներ ունենաս, կուզենա՞ս հայերեն իմանան:

Ջ: Հաստատ, ուզում եմ...

Շ: Ինչո՞ւ, ինչո՞ւ կուզենաս:

Ջ: Որտե՛ս like, երբ, language is part of like culture, obviously ու եթե կարողանաս, եթե իրանք չկարողանան խոսալ, then it's like, it stops, like part of your Armenian heritage like doesn't transfer over to them, like they don't know everything, 'cause then it's like, հայերենը սավսեմ կորցնում են:

S: When you have children, would you like them to know Armenian?

G: Definitely, I want to...

S: Why? Why would you like to?

G: 'Cause **like** when, **language is part of like culture, obviously** and if you can, if they can't speak, **then it's like, it stops, like part of your Armenian heritage doesn't transfer over to them, like they don't know everything, 'cause then it's like** Armenian is altogether [*uses Russian word *covsem/savsem**] lost.

[G.K. / Age 21 / F / Birthplace – Yerevan, Armenia / Age of arrival – 10 months]

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Ես ըհ ըմ ո՞նց ասեմ, լեզուն հայ լեզուն ինձ համար շատ շատ կարևոր մի բան  
ա որովհետեւ իմն ա եւ եթե լեզուն չիմանա, լեզուն ա որ մեր ըմ ազգին ոնց որ  
թողնում ա որ հարազատ մնանք մեր ազգին, եթե լեզուն կորցնենք ամեն ինչ  
կկորցնենք: So դա իմ համար շատ, իմ համար շատ կարևոր է:

I uh um, how can I say it, language, the Armenian language is a very very important thing  
for me because it's mine uh and if you don't know the language, the language um is what  
allows our people to like be authentic/genuine/true to our people, if we lose the language  
we will lose everything. **So** that is very, it's very important for me.

*[L.S. / Age 24 / F / Birthplace – Yerevan, Armenia / Age of arrival – 3]*

The awareness of a dispersed Armenian existence and the internalized moral obligation  
of claiming and perpetuating the heritage culture and language lead to a central belief among  
Armenian heritage speakers, which equates being Armenian with knowing Armenian. Similar to  
the traditional and ascribed characterization of Armenianness held by foreign-born, older, and  
highly proficient community members discussed above, heritage speakers project a conscious  
understanding that Armenian identity is contingent on knowledge and practice of the language.  
This is often articulated as a compulsory equivalence in which claiming Armenian identity  
requires proficiency in Armenian. With the exception of one participant who had a non-  
Armenian parent and self-identified as Armenian-American, all the participants self-identified as  
Armenian, asserting a very strong and proud possession of Armenian identity. The selections  
below feature the belief that knowledge of the Armenian language is a necessary precondition to  
claiming Armenian identity.

Ես հայ եմ ու պետք ա իմանալ հայերեն խոսելը:

I am Armenian and it's necessary to know how to speak Armenian.

*[A.A. / Age 22 / F / Birthplace – Pasadena, CA / Father born in Tehran, Iran / Mother  
born in Yerevan, Armenia]*

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I mean հայ եմ, պիտի իմանամ, պետք ա ինձի:

**I mean** I am Armenian, I need to know [Armenian], it's necessary for me.

*[A.F. / Age19 / M / Birthplace – Burbank, CA / Father born in Armenia / Mother born in Aleppo, Syria, repatriated to Armenia at age 16 before moving to U.S.]*

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It's my native language so like I should know it *[originally said in English]*.

*[G.Z. / Age19 / M / Birthplace – West Covina, CA / Parents from Yerevan, Armenia]*

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Որտե՛ւ it's my language, it's part of my heritage, it's who I am:

**'Cause it's my language, it's part of my heritage, it's who I am:**

*[L.A. / Age 20 / F / Birthplace – Glendale, CA / Parents repatriated to Armenia from Iran]*

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Շ: Օկ: Քեզ համար կարեւոր է հայերէն իմանալը:

Ա: Շատ:

Շ: Ինչո՞ւ:

Ա: Որովհետեւ պետք է: Եթէ մենք հայ ենք ուրեմն շատ կարեւոր է մենք մեր լեզուն իմանանք:

S: Ok: Is it important for you to know Armenian?

A: Very.

S: Why?

A: Because it's necessary. If we are Armenian then it's really important that we know our language.

*[A.K. / Age 20 / F / Birthplace – Yerevan, Armenia / Age of arrival - 3]*

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'Cause it's like a big deal to me որ like հայ եմ, ու so I want like եթէ հայ ես, you should know your language because that's part of your culture ու եթէ չգիտես it's kind of like, okaaay, like why don't you know it? It's kind of sad.

**'Cause it's like a big deal to me that like I am Armenian, and so I want like, if you're Armenian you should know your language because that's part of your culture and if you don't know it's kind of like, okaaay, like why don't you know it? It's kind of sad.**

*[G.K. / Age 21 / F / Birthplace – Yerevan, Armenia / Age of arrival – 10 months]*

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Եթե հայ ես ը հենց ըմ հայը հայ I don't know եթե հայը իրա մայրենի լեզուն չիմանա ... իմ կարծիքով հայերը որ օրինակ ուրիշների հետ շատ անգամ ամուսնանում են բան, կորում են, ձուլվում են, իմ կարծիքով: Հետո պապաս էլ միշտ ասում ա՝ եթե հայ ես, պետք ա ոչ թե մենակ կարողանաս խոսաս, այլ գրես եւ կարդաս:

If you're Armenian, uh just um the Armenian, Armenian, **I don't know**, if the Armenian doesn't know his mother tongue ... in my opinion, Armenians who for example often marry others and the like, they are lost, they assimilate, in my opinion. And then, my dad also always says if you are Armenian, you must not only know how to speak, but also to write and read.

[S.M. / Age 2 / F / Birthplace – Yerevan, Armenia / Age of arrival – 7.5]

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Ըր որովհետեւ ըր ըր I mean տեսնում են որ ուրտեից եմ ես գալիս I mean հայ I have the Armenian ancestry, ըտեղից եմ ես գալիս, so ուզում եմ որ իմանամ, ոնց որ ըմ subconsciously ոնց որ սխալ եմ եթե չեմ իմանում: I don't know what it is, I mean չեմ կարա ճիշտ մաքուր բացատրեմ, բայց ըմ I don't know, սենց հոգիս մեջ մի բան ա որ պիտի, ուզում ա, ուզում եմ, ուզում եմ որ իմանամ: Էտ պ պետք ա, հա պետք ա որ ծնողները կամ էլ բարեկամների հետ կարաս ըր խառնվես, ժպիտես ըտենց բաներ անես, բայց ըր ըտենց իմ հոգիս մեջ, իմ միտքիս մեջ, ըտենց ուզում եմ:

Uh because uh uh **I mean** I see where I am coming from **I mean** Armenian **I have the Armenian ancestry**, that's where I am coming from, **so** I want to know [Armenian], it's like um **subconsciously** it's like I am wrong if I don't know it. **I don't know what it is, I mean** I can't explain it right, clearly, but um I don't know, it's like there's something in my soul that I must, it wants, I want, I want to know it. That's necessary, yeah it's necessary for being able to interact [*uses verb "to mix"*] with parents or relatives or so that you can smile [*verb conjugated with incorrect pattern and without vowel reduction*] and do things like that, but uhh like that in my soul, in my mind, I want to like that.

[A.F. / Age19 / M / Birthplace – Burbank, CA / Father born in Armenia / Mother born in Aleppo, Syria, repatriated to Armenia at age 16 before moving to U.S.]

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Ըմ I mean հայերենը ը like որոշում ա, I think լեզուն որոշում ա like ըմ որ ազգից ես, ու էդ ամենակարեւոր բանն ա, հատկապես հայերի համար, որ like ասում են որ հայերը գնում են, որ մի տեղ տեսնում են իրար like oh հա՞ էք դուք, like they don't say oh you know like are you Christian? Or like even եթե էրեւում ա որ հայ էք like միշտ սկսվում ա խոսակցությունը էդի շատ կարեւոր բան ա: Like

կարաս ասես, oh like I am Armenian ու անգլերեն խոսաս, բայց էդ նույն like power-ը չի ունենա քանց թե որ հայերեն ենք խոսում իրար հետ:

Um **I mean** the Armenian language uh **like** determines, **I think** language determines uh **like** um which ethnicity/people you are from, and that is the most important thing, especially for Armenians, **like** when they say that when Armenians go, like when they see each other somewhere **like**: “Oh, are you Armenian?” Like they don’t say: “**Oh you know like are you Christian?**” **Or like even** if it shows that you’re Armenian **like** a conversation always sparks up, that’s a very important thing. **Like** you can say, **oh like I am Armenian** and speak English, but it won’t have that same **like power** [*Armenian definite article attached to English noun “power”*] versus if we speak Armenian to each other.

*[P.G. / Age 19 / F / Birthplace – Montobello, CA / Parents from Yerevan, Armenia]*

Ասենք եթե, ասենք հայտնվում ա որ մեկը, ես իմանում եմ որ մեկը հայ ա ու օգնություն ա պետք, ըր ես իրանց ըր like I’ll go to them ու հայերենով կխոսամ, որ իմանան որ հայ եմ ու իրանք իրանք էլ հանգիստ կզգան որ իմանում են որ հայ եմ: Բայց մարդիկ կան որ առաջուց որ նայում են չեն նկատում որ հայ եմ կամ էլ չե նե օտար: Էս օտար մեկը ով ա կասեն, բայց բայց հետո որ սկսում եմ խոսալ ասում են oh հայ ա, ok: Բայց էտ ժամանակում էլ կօգտագործեմ որ ու ուզում եմ որ մարդիկ իմանան որ oh էս տղան հայ ա so yeah..

Let’s say if, for example someone appears that I know is Armenian and needs help, uh I uh them uh **like I’ll go to them** and speak in Armenian so that they know that I am Armenian and they they will feel comfortable too if they know that I’m Armenian. But there are people who don’t notice that I am Armenian when they first look [at me] or assume I am a foreigner. “Who is this foreigner?” they’ll say, but but then when I start speaking Armenian they say, “Oh, he’s Armenian, **ok.**” But in that time I will also use [Armenian] when I want for people to know that oh this boy is Armenian **so yeah...**

*[A.F. / Age 19 / M / Birthplace – Burbank, CA / Father born in Armenia / Mother born in Aleppo, Syria, repatriated to Armenia at age 16 before moving to U.S.]*

As evidenced in these examples, for heritage speakers living in the Diaspora language is much more than a means of communication. “It is a link to the larger Armenian family, a cohesive symbol of identity” (Bakalian 1993: 267). Precisely because of their diasporic existence, language functions as an extremely powerful unifying force for Armenians all over the world. In the absence of the Armenian language, often there is limited ground on which

Armenians from different countries can interact. An Armenian from Russia who only speaks Russian, for example, cannot speak with a Parisian Armenian who knows only French. “Without this interaction, the Armenian people disintegrate into a random assortment of isolated diasporas. Knowing Armenian, on the other hand, brings people closer to their community and makes them feel more connected; if one is even peripherally involved in the Armenian community, speaking the language provides a credential providing membership and authenticity” (Vaux 1999: 7). Furthermore, one can also communicate with the large number of people who know Armenian but not English, creating strong connections across borders as well as reducing the culture gap with one’s elders. Parallel to the remarks in the last two quotes above, in her study of the Washington, DC community, O’Grady (1979: 108) writes that Armenians traveling overseas or in the U.S. communicate easily because of the shared language, often introducing themselves with saying, “Hay es? Yes Hay em,” (Are you Armenian? I am Armenian). This type of interaction immediately signals and establishes a shared cultural and ethnic heritage through the medium of a common language (cited in Bakalian 1993: 267).

### **Anti-Armenian Language Behavior**

As the discussion above suggests, the Armenian language is highly valued by heritage speakers and their families with strong sentiments about its role in marking identity and functioning as the main vehicle of cultural transmission. In the 129 Armenian responses to the National Heritage Language Survey, 98.4% of respondents reported that their parents want them to maintain their heritage language. Similarly, 100% of the 27 interviewees for this study stated that their families want them to maintain the knowledge and use of Armenian. However, despite the strong sentiments outlined above, there are less overt and less obvious language behaviors and attitudes that conflict with the positive attitudes and public orientations towards Armenian.

Essentially Armenian is stripped of its utility and considered to be devoid of any practical or instrumental value. Knowledge of Armenian seems to bear no benefits outside of the emotional and personal realm, with no tangible material gains. Most importantly, when viewed as an obstacle to academic advancement (which is naturally centered on English), and as such, to the accompanying socioeconomic and social mobility, it is deprioritized and devalued.

In the examples below, speakers reveal a clear boundary in the usefulness of Armenian, which bears strong sentimental value in the intimate, personal, and familial realm, but no practical significance in the professional, exterior world. Similar to the spatial compartmentalization discussed in Chapter 4, the Armenian language functions within clearly marked Armenian spaces (i.e. the Armenian family, the Armenian community, the Armenian cause); yet it has no room in the wider American society. As speakers highlight, Armenian is not useful and therefore, not needed in the larger American community.

Լավ է որ մի քանի լեզու իմանաս, լավ է որ քո մայրենի լեզուն իմանաս, ուղղակի իմ մասնագիտության մեջ չեմ կարծում, կոնկրետ մասնագիտությանս մեջ կարելուր կլինի:

It's good to know a few languages, it's good to know your mother tongue, but I simply don't think that in my profession it'll be important specifically in my profession.

*[T.S / Age 21 / F / Birthplace – Gyumri, Armenia / Age of arrival - 15]*

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Բայց ինչ որ ես եմ ուզում անել, հայերեն իմանալը ընդ իմ you know պետք չի, որովհետեւ մենակ անգլերենով պետք ա, խոսելու եմ բան: Even though Ամերիկայում you know ինձ պետք չի, բայց ի իմ համար պետք ա, so...

But for what I want to do knowing Armenian uh my **you know** is not necessary, because I am only going to need to speak in English and stuff. **Even though** in America **you know** it's not necessary for me, but for me, it's necessary, **so**...

*[A.A. / Age 22 / F / Birthplace – Pasadena, CA / Father born in Tehran, Iran / Mother born in Yerevan, Armenia]*

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Շ: Ok Ըմմ կարծում ես քո ապագայի համար լա՞վ է որ հայերեն գիտես:

Ա: Այո:

Շ: Ինչո՞ւ:

Ա: (laughter): Ըմմ իմ համար, ես ուզում եմ հայի հետ ամուսնանամ, հայ ընտանիքի մեջ մնամ, երեխաներիս հայերեն սովորացնեմ, so իմ համար personally կարելուր ա դա: Կարող ա պրոֆեսիոնալ բանում չօգնի ինձ բայց անձնական կյանքում ինձ կօգնի:

S: **Ok** um do you think it's good for your future that you know Armenian?

A: Yes.

S: Why?

A: (laughter) Um for me, I want to marry an Armenian, stay in an Armenian family, teach my kids Armenian, so for me **personally** that's important. Perhaps it won't help me in a professional thing but it'll help me in my personal life.

[A.H. / Age 19 / F / Birthplace – Yerevan, Armenia / Age of arrival - 8]

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Yeah, I think մեծանալուց ըմմ, ասում ես երանի փոքր վախտը սովորելի երբ որ տասիկը փորձում էր սովորացներ ու բան, ըմ բայց ես միշտ եմ ուզեցել սովորել, but չէի ուզում I guess effort-ը դնելի like into it and like to try it, ու հասկապես որ like Ամերիկական community-ում, like American community-ում ենք, it's եղբան էլ practical չի, it's just within the family:

**Yeah, I think** growing up umm, you say I wish I had learned [Armenian] when I was young when grandma was trying to teach it and stuff, um but I always wanted to learn, **but** I didn't want to, **I guess** put the **effort** [*Armenian definite article attached to English noun*] **like into it and like to try it**, and especially since **like** in the American [*artificial adjective created*] **community** [*locative suffix added to English noun*], **like** we're in the **American community** [*locative suffix added to English noun*], **it's** not that practical, **it's just within the family**.

[G.K. / Age 21 / F / Birthplace – Yerevan, Armenia / Age of arrival – 10 months]

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Կարող ա որ like հայկական բաների մեջ որ involved էլնեմ շատ, ըստնց օգուտ կանի, բայց other than that, well, if if I am like trying to further the Armenian Cause or something, that way I need to know, but other than that, no, I don't think I need it for anything.

Maybe if I become **like** very **involved** in Armenian things, it'll [knowing Armenian] benefit me like that, but **other than that, well, if if I am like trying to further the**

**Armenian cause or something, that way I need to know, but other than that, no, I don't think I need it for anything.**

*[G.Z. / Age 19 / M / Birthplace – West Covina, CA / Parents from Yerevan, Armenia]*

Additionally, as demonstrated in the three examples below, heritage speakers quickly pick up on the fact that Armenian is not a useful second language in the U.S. in comparison to Spanish, for example. It seems that parents also subscribe to this ideology and transmit it in order to ensure their children's academic and career success. Moreover, as seen in the third example below, in which a speaker explains his reasoning for taking Spanish instead of Armenian, both of which were offered in his high school, for some speakers and their parents, the assumption is that heritage speakers already know Armenian, and do not need formal instruction in their language.

Ըմ մայրս միշտ ասում ա oh like իսպաներեն սովորի, իսպաներեն, բայց իմ կարծիքով հայերենը ավելի ը կարելոր ա, so դրա համար: I mean իսպաներեն վերցրել եմ, չեմ կարծում ինձ ավելի թանկ(զ) ա քանց թե հայերենը, so...

Um my mother always says oh **like** learn Spanish, Spanish, but in my opinion Armenian is uh more important, **so** that's why. **I mean** I've taken Spanish, I don't think it's more valuable than Armenian for me, **so**...

*[P.G. / Age 19 / F / Birthplace – Montebello, CA / Parents from Yerevan, Armenia]*

Ճիշտն ասած ըմ հետագայի համար իսպաներենը երեւի ավելի ը ոնց որ ասում են ձեռք կտա որտեւ ավելի ը Los Angeles-ում you know, ը նախընտրում են իսպաներեն իմանալը:

To be honest, um for the future Spanish is probably more, uh like they say, profitable 'cause in **Los Angeles** [*locative suffix attached directly*] **you know**, uh they prefer knowing Spanish more.

*[S.V. / Age 21 / F / Birthplace – Yerevan, Armenia / Age of arrival – 4 months]*

Էդի կոնկրետ ինչ որ ձեւի շատ լուրջ չզգի չզգեցի բռնեցի, ուղղա(ր)կի ասեցի, ընդէ մի երկու հոգի կան որ պտի վեկալեին բան, ասեցի դասարանում մենակ չըլնեմ՝ իրանց հետ վեկալեցի, ըը եսիմ դէ, համ էլ ասում էին ըը ոնց որ պետք

կգա էլի եղ լեզուն, իսպաներենը որ իմանաս բան, դա, տենց ասում էին, համ էլ ասեցին որ ավելի հեշտ ա քան ը օրինակ՝ ֆրանսերեն, եղ էլ կար: Ըմ հայերենն էլ ասեցի դե իմանում եմ, եթե ուզենամ ինքնուրույն կարամ նստեմ սովորեմ, տառերը բան, չնայած սաղ տառերն էլ չէի մոռացել, ասեցի եթե ուզենամ ես կարամ ինքնուրույն սովորեմ, դրա համար ասեցի դե քանի որ մեկ ա պետք ա, իսպաներենը ուրիշ լեզու ա բան, սովորեմ..

I didn't really weigh that in any serious way, I just said, there are a few people who had to take it and stuff, I said, I don't wanna be alone in the class, so I took it with them, uh I don't know, well, also, they were saying uh like it'll be useful, you know, if you know that language, if you know Spanish and stuff, that, they would say that, also they said that it's much easier than French, for example, there was that too. Um as for Armenian, I said well I know it, if I want to, I can sit down and study it on my own, the letters and stuff, although I hadn't forgotten all the letters, I said, if I want to, I can learn it on my own, that's why I said well since it's necessary anyway, Spanish is another language and stuff, I'll learn it...

*[V.A. / Age 21 / M / Birthplace – Yerevan, Armenia / Age of arrival - 1]*

Furthermore, as can be gleaned from the selection below, Armenian is deprioritized when viewed as competing with academic advancement in the Anglophone school environment. In response to why he did not attend Saturday school like many of his friends, the respondent below explained that he was too overwhelmed with his college preparatory courses, and his parents did not want to burden him with the additional responsibility of attending Saturday school.

Վ: Էդի առաջարկեցին բայց չուզեցի, որտեւ շատ էի ծանրաբեռնված եղ վախտ ը բան չեմ մանում եթե լսել եք Avid ակումբը (ըհըհ, ըհըհ), շատ անկապ բան էր բայց (laughter) չէի, ժամանակ էր, շատ ժամանակ էր խլում, հա ժամանակ ոչ/2 մի բանի չէի ունենում (հմմ) դրա պատճառով:

Շ: Իսկ ը դպրոցից դուրս՝ տանը ծնողներդ կամ տատիկ-պապիկներդ փորձե՞լ են քեզ հայերեն սովորեցնեն կամ պարապեն:

Վ: Ըը չէէէ, ըը դե ավելի ճիշտ գիտես իսի չեն տենց բաներ ստիպել որտեւ դե որ ծանր, տենում են էլի որ ես (ըհըհ) ծանրաբեռնված եմ բան, չեն ուզում եղ ազատ ժամանակ եթե ունենամ բան էղ, եղ էլ խլեն ինձանից, բայց ը տատիկս, դե էսի ավելի փոքր վախտ, բայց երեւի ճիշտ էղ ժամանակներն էին էլի, տատիկս էլ ոտանավորներ եսիմ ըտենց (ըհըհ) էղ ձեւի բաներ բայց ոչ/2 մի ըտենց լուրջ ձեւի չեմ պարապել հայերեն:

V: They offered that but I didn't want it, 'cause I was really overwhelmed at that time, uh thing, I don't know if you've [formal use of second person plural used for politeness] heard of Avid Club<sup>51</sup> (uh huh, uh huh), it was really random but (laughter), I wasn't, it was, taking a lot of time, yeah I wouldn't have time for anything (hmm) because of that.

S: And uh outside of school, did your parents or grandparents try to teach you Armenian at home, instruct you?

V: Uh nooo, uh well more accurately, you know [slips back into informal form of address] why they didn't force me to do stuff like that 'cause since it was tough, they see that I (uh huh) am weighed down and stuff, if I have that free time, they don't want thing, that, to take that away from me too, but my grandma, I don't know, she would teach things like poems like that and stuff like that (uh huh), but I haven't studied Armenian in any serious way like that.

[V.A. / Age 21 / M / Birthplace – Yerevan, Armenia / Age of arrival - 1]

Similarly, in the case of the following respondent, his parents chose to move him and his brother from a public school, which was heavily Armenian-populated and offered afterschool Armenian courses to a more prestigious private Catholic school near the mother's workplace.

Paradoxically, after a few years the parents began getting angry with the children for losing their proficiency in Armenian and becoming English dominant.

Շ: Ok: Իսկ ի՞նչ ես կարծում, ո՞ր տարիքում անգլերենը ավելի ուժեղ դարձավ:  
U: Ըրը 11 տարեկանում, որ ըր արդեն որ ըր մ միջնակարգ դպրոցը սկսա, ըր ու էտ պետական դպրոցից ավարտեցի, ըմ սկ Catholic դպրոց սկսա, որտեղ ըր շատ հայեր չկային, so հայերենս շատ դպրոց, մանավան դպրոցի մեջ հեջ չէի օգտագործում, մենակ տան մեջ ու էտենց էլ կամաց կամաց սկսեցի կորցնել հայերենը ու դժվար էր: Ըսենց խոսք չէինք չէինք կարող ունենալ ու ըր ու մենակ անգլերեն էի խոսում, ու պապաս էլ ըսկսում ա, I mean ծնողներս՝ էրկուսն էլ ըսկսան ըր, ջղայնացան իմ վրա որտեւ արդեն կորցնում էի, ախպերս էլ նույնը, ինքն էլ, էդ ըր նույն դպրոցի ավագ դպրոցն էր, ըր հաճախում, ու ինքն էլ էր կամաց կամաց սկսում կորցնել, so բայց, բայց իրանք ուզում են որ, որ էտ դպրոցը գնայինք որտեւ private դպրոց էր, ու մամայիս գործի տեղ մոտիկ էր, so ըտեղ էին ուզում որ մենք գնայինք, ըտեղ հաճախում ենք:

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<sup>51</sup> “AVID, Advancement Via Individual Determination, is a college readiness system for elementary through higher education that is designed to increase schoolwide learning and performance. The AVID College Readiness System (ACRS) accelerates student learning, uses research based methods of effective instruction, provides meaningful and motivational professional learning, and acts as a catalyst for systemic reform and change” ([http://www.avid.org/abo\\_whatisavid.html](http://www.avid.org/abo_whatisavid.html)).



S: **Ok.** What do you think? At what age did English become stronger?

A: Uhh at age 11, when uh already when uh I started in middle school, uh and I graduated from that public school, umm I started **Catholic** school, where uh there weren't a lot of Armenians, so my Armenian really, especially since I wouldn't use it at all in school, only at home, and like that, I started slowly losing Armenian and it was hard. We couldn't couldn't have a conversation like this and uh I would only speak English, and my dad would start, **I mean** my parents, both of them began uh, they got angry at me 'cause I was already losing it, the same with my brother, he too was attending, was in the same high school of that same school, and he too was slowly starting to lose it, **so** but, but they wanted that, that we go to that school 'cause it was a **private** school, and close to my mom's workplace, **so** they wanted us to go there, we attend school there.

*[A.F. / Age19 / M / Birthplace – Burbank, CA / Father born in Armenia / Mother born in Aleppo, Syria, repatriated to Armenia at age 16 before moving to U.S.]*

The influence of U.S. language ideologies is clearly present in the negative attitudes and behaviors demonstrated in the selected quotes above. The link between English and social, economic, and educational success is an extremely strong one, and the knowledge of Armenian and the effort and material resources necessary to develop it are often viewed as incompatible with many of those pursuits. Both Bakalian (1993) and Vaux (1999) confirm that Armenians in the American mainstream see no practical need for their heritage language. "Armenian, the reasoning goes, is not useful as a second language compared to Spanish or French, and it doesn't help one in business or getting into college" (Vaux 1999: 5). As the selections from speakers' interviews demonstrate, youth are extremely sensitive to issues of practicality, and pick up on these very quickly. Often the prestige and loyalty people feel for languages are driven by socio-economic factors in which knowledge of a language is viewed as linguistic capital, traded on the linguistic market (Fishman 1991). According to this formulation, knowing English enjoys unlimited capital in the social and economic rewards it promises, while knowledge of Armenian possesses no status in this particular market.

Additionally, all the subgroups comprising the Armenian community of Los Angeles

come from bi- or multilingual societies, both in the Middle East and Armenia, where knowledge of multiple languages is the expected norm, not the exception. As a result, they are unprepared for the monolingual ideology of the U.S. and the cultural and social attitudes that discourage the maintenance of heritage languages. In her comparative study of Armenians in Cyprus and London, Susan Pattie (1990) concurs that learning several languages comes naturally to Armenians who grow up in the Middle East, while “it does not seem natural in London to be multilingual” (cited in Bakalian 1993: 263). Compartmentalizing and code-switching between Armenian, Greek, Arabic, French, and English frames the worldview of Armenians in the Middle East, while in monolingual societies such as the U.S. or England, “speaking languages other than English, even on the simplest level, requires effort, determination, and a different attitude towards language than that of the host culture” (Pattie 1990: 280 cited in Bakalian 1993: 265), which is not easy to instill in the younger generation. Similarly, in the Republic of Armenia, bi- and multilingualism are not only viewed as highly desirable, but the customary norm. In the Soviet period, Russian was an undeniable presence in Armenians’ daily life, not only as an obligatory subject in school starting from first grade, but often as the preferred language of higher education and social mobility. Additionally, children were frequently also encouraged to study a third language, often French, English or German, starting in the second grade. Currently, in the post-independence period, Russian, though no longer obligatory in school, still functions as a prominent second language for the older generations, with English enjoying top prestige and appeal for the youth. The well-known Armenian saying «քանի լեզու գիտես այնքան մարդ ես», which translates to “the more languages you know the greater a man you are,” sums up the typical attitude of Armenians toward polylingualism.

In addition to the impact of U.S. language ideologies, for the cohort from the Republic of

Armenia, lack of experience living in a minority status, and the resulting ignorance of the speed of linguistic and cultural assimilation may play a role. The assumption for many immigrants from Armenia is that their children will automatically and instinctively speak their heritage language, without any explicit effort or intervention. Moreover, in the Republic of Armenia, particularly in the Soviet period, Armenian education was highly centralized and regimented, following the standard Soviet model of complete state control of curricula and teaching methods. As a result, there was no need for parental involvement in any of the academic processes, and no options such as deciding between public and private schools, selecting magnet or specialized schools, language program options, and the like. Therefore, this sub-group of the Los Angeles community is oblivious to the fact that “the maintenance of the Armenian language, like that of other ethnic languages, is dependent on the financial and other material and non-material resources of the community, and most important on the willingness of parents to send their children to special Armenian schools and extracurricular activities” (Bakalian 1993: 261-262).

Even the population that clearly makes the conscious decision, effort, and financial investment in sending their children to private Armenian schools, displaying overtly positive attitudes, often also exhibits concurrent negative attitudes toward the Armenian language. Parents in the Prelacy Armenian community schools of Los Angeles are frequently complicit in lowering the status of Armenian and thus influencing their children’s attitudes and behaviors. To begin with, in a survey of the 2012 incoming first graders’ parents at Chamlian Armenian School in Glendale, CA, parents were asked to rate the following factors in their decision to send their child to an Armenian school: safe environment, standards of education, high proficiency/fluency in the Armenian language, fostering a sense of “Armenianness,” and Armenian environment (social circle, friends, activities). Safe environment and standards of education received the

highest ratings, 34% and 24% respectively, with the remaining three, including high proficiency/fluency in the Armenian language receiving 15% (Karapetian 2013). Parental attitude became even more revealed during a focus group discussion (02/09/2013) with all of the Armenian teachers from the Prelacy schools, during which teachers stated that parents frequently represent the greatest obstacle to developing Armenian proficiency among their students. Teachers explained that in addition to Armenian not being spoken at home as the dominant language for many of their students, parents also visibly devalue it in comparison to other “important” subjects such as math or English. These negative behavior patterns often take the shape of constant requests to teachers and administrators to reduce the workload of the Armenian subjects as they take up too much time and interfere with students completing their homework for the other more essential subjects. As a result, some teachers have received instructions from the administration to stop assigning Armenian homework and/or go easy in their grading in order to appease the parents.

### **Resulting Tensions of Divergent Ideologies**

The contradictions between the internalized elevated language ideologies and lower proficiency as a result of negative attitudes and behaviors, lead to a state of cognitive dissonance (Festinger 1957), involving multiple sources of tension and anxiety for heritage speakers. In psychology, cognitive dissonance describes the excessive mental stress experienced by an individual who holds two or more inconsistent beliefs, ideas, or values at the same time. This type of discomfort may also emerge within a person who holds a particular belief but performs a contradictory action. In her analysis of the responses in the National Heritage Language Survey, Kagan (2012) observes that as a result of their daily existence in two cultures, heritage language learners’ cognitive skills may be affected by various types of cognitive dissonance. The first

kind, related to an inability to express themselves easily in the home language, often manifests in expressions of embarrassment and shame. These types of intense emotions stem from heritage speakers'/learners' conception of "the heritage language as an inherent part of [their] being ('my language'), and ... a clear marker of 'belonging uncertainty' (Walton & Cohen 2007)" (Kagan 2012: 75), as they cope with their "inability to perform this 'belonging' properly" (Kagan 2012: 75).

In the case of Armenian heritage speakers, they clearly subscribe to the "language-and-identity" ideology, which emphasizes the inherent connection between a person and his/her native language (Myhill 1999:34); however, their lack of high competence in the heritage language does not allow them to fully meet the requirements set by the ideology. Heritage speakers are keenly aware of the contradictions inherent in the fact that they define an Armenian person as someone who speaks Armenian *well*, and furthermore they self-identify as Armenian, yet for the most part they are English dominant. As a result of this inconsistency, there is a great tension in claiming full access to Armenian identity due to lack of the required linguistic proficiency. Often this is expressed in the negation of the equation, so that the consideration of someone who is Armenian but does not know Armenian well results in feelings of shame and embarrassment.

Չեմ կարողանում ընդունեմ որ իմ լեզուն չեմ կարողանում շատ սիրուն խոսեմ:  
Դժվար ա իմ համար ընդունելը:

I can't accept that I am not able to speak my language well/beautifully. It's hard for me to accept it.

[S.M. / Age 22 / F / Birthplace – Tehran, Iran / Age of arrival - 7]

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Էնքան որ իմ համար շատ կարեւոր է սովորելը, լեզուս է կարեւոր, էտի արդեն ասեցի, որ նորմալ կարողանամ, օրինակ չամա(ն)ջել ուրիշների մոտ, որտեւ

ինքդ քեզի վատ ես զգում որ մի բան սխալ է, վատ ձեռով ես ինքդ քեզի զգում: Oh ok հայերենս չգիտեմ, նենց ամանչում ես որ չգիտես քո լեզուն:

It's just that for me it's really important to learn [Armenian], my language is important, I already said that, so that I can speak normally, not be embarrassed in front of others, for example, 'cause you feel bad when something is wrong, you feel yourself in a bad way. Oh **ok** I don't know Armenian. You are so ashamed that you don't know your language.

*[A.K. / Age 19 / F / Birthplace – Abovian, Armenia / Age of arrival – 6 / Parents repatriated from Iran to Armenia]*

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Շ: Ok անկեղծորեն, ինչո՞ւ ես արձանագրվել մեր դասարանում:

Մ: Հայերենի դասը վերցրել եմ որովհետեւ ուզում էի ըմ, լավ չի որ չգիտեի ոնց գրել, ոնց կարդայի, ես ամաչում էի որ հայ եմ բայց եղպես բան է, եղպես հայերեն չեմ հասկանում, չեմ կարող կարդալ: Ըմ դրա համար եմ ես դասը վերցրել:

Շ: Ok, քեզ համար կարեւո՞ր է հայերեն իմանալը:

Մ: Այո, շատ կարեւոր է:

Շ: Ինչո՞ւ:

Մ: Առաջ կարեւոր չէր, որտեւ փոքր էի, չէի կարծում որ կարեւոր է բայց հիմա որ ես ինձ որպես հայ եմ տեսնում, ավելի կարեւոր է:

S: Ok honestly, why have you enrolled in this class?

M: I've taken the Armenian class because um, it's not good that I didn't know how to write, how to read, I was ashamed that I am Armenian but it's like that, I don't understand Armenian, I can't read. That's why I've taken this class.

S: Ok, is it important for you to know Armenian?

M: Yes, it's very important.

S: Why?

M: It wasn't important before, 'cause I was young, I didn't think that it's important, but now that I see myself as an Armenian, it's more important.

*[M.T. / Age 18 / F / Birthplace – Pales Verdes, CA / Father from Gyumri, Armenia / Mother from Yerevan, Armenia]*

Additionally, the opposing values speakers assign to the nature of Armenian and American identities further complicate this complex equation between language and identity. Whereas Armenian identity is seen as possessing full, complete, and ideal value, American identity is often reduced and dismissed as having zero worth. Possessing and/or transmitting

Armenian identity is equated with the endowment of a comprehensive sense of history, heritage, culture, language, and sentimental value, while assimilating into American culture is perceived as a complete loss of a sense of identity. In other words, assimilation into American culture is not seen as a process of transferring from one cultural heritage to another, but rather as the dissolution of a highly prized heritage into a non-existent, indescribable one. Whereas the transmission of the Armenian language to future generations will guarantee them “some,” “a sort of,” or “a little bit” of identity, the implications of the reversal of that formula indicate that American identity has zero value. The selections below reveal the grand qualities associated with Armenian identity along with the opposing dismissive conceptions related to American identity. The last two quotes particularly display the agency exerted in rejecting any American epitaph and asserting their ownership of Armenian identity.

Շ: Երբ որ քեզ հարցնում են ազգության մասին, ինչպե՞ս ես պատասխանում:  
 Ն: Ես հայ եմ ասում եւ եթե ինչ որ ավելորդ հարցեր լինում են, թե ինչ ձեւի հայ ու շատ է լինում դա, թե տեղացի, ախպար, ը սփյուռքահայ, ասում եմ որ բնիկ հայ (laugh), թեկուզ Հայաստան ծնված, ստեղ մեծածաց, բայց համարում եմ, ես ինձ ամերիկացի չեմ համարում ը որովհետեւ ը դա թեկուզ, ստեղի ամերիկացու համար, իտալա իտալա-ամերիկացու համար դժվար բան է ասել – ամերիկացի թե ինչ է, բնիկ ամերիկացուց բացի, իմ կարծիքով ուրիշ ամերիկացի ճիշտ չկա: Բայց ը քանի որ եդքան հզոր, եդքան ը ասենք ը թարմ եւ ը հզոր իմ ը հոգու մեջ հայ լինելու իր ասենք ը որոշ greatness of being Armenian, its positives, its benefits, its, the all-encompassing reasons, ը եդ մտքով ը միշտ ասում եմ որ հայ եմ ու ուրիշ ոչինչ:

S: When you are asked about your ethnicity, how do you respond?

N: I say Armenian and if there are any additional questions about what kind of Armenian and that happens a lot, are you a native, repatriate, uh diaspora-Armenian, I say that I am native Armenian, even though born in Armenia, but raised here, but I consider myself, I don't consider myself an American uh because uh even for an American from here, Italian for an Italian-American it's a hard thing to say, what is an American, besides Native-Americans in my opinion there is no other true American. But uh because being Armenian, it's that powerful, that uh let's say uh fresh and uh powerful in my uh soul the **greatness of being Armenian, its positives, its benefits, its, the all-encompassing reasons**, uh with that thought uh I always say that I am Armenian and nothing else.

[N.S. / Age 22 / M / Birthplace – Gyumri, Armenia / Age of arrival – 3.5]

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Շ: Ok ըրը երբ որ երեխաներ ունենաս, հայերեն կսովորեցնե՞ս ու իրենց:

Ա: Այո:

Շ: Ինչո՞ւ:

Ա: Ըր ինչո՞ւ: I mean որտե՛ս կար կարելո՞ր ա որտե՛ս մենակ չեմ ուզում մենակ ասեմ oh որտե՛ս ծնողներս ու իմ տատիկս պապիկս գիտեն որտե՛ս ըր ... էսի անգլերենով պիտի բացատրեմ because it's like, it's a sort of identity. I don't want them to get lost in um just American culture and just have that and that's all they know. I'd rather have them – 'cause there is kids I know here who just they're like oh, "Where are you from?" or "What's your culture like?" Oh, "It's just American. I don't know where my parents came from, I don't know the history, I don't know the those things." And I kind of feel bad for them and I want them and I want my, I don't want my kids to do that. I want them to have an identity, know where they came from, and know what it's about and be able to explain it and do that culture that they've that they've been instilled, that I've instilled in them and do it to the fullest of their capabilities which means language and writing and reading and all those different things.

S: **Ok** uh when you have kids, will you teach them Armenian.

A: Yes.

S: Why?

A: Uh why? **I mean** 'cause imp it's important 'cause only I don't want to only say oh 'cause my parents or my grandma grandpa know 'cause uh ... I have to explain this in English **because it's like, it's a sort of identity. I don't want them to get lost in um just American culture and just have that and that's all they know. I'd rather have them – 'cause there is kids I know here who just they're like oh, "Where are you from?" or "What's your culture like?" Oh, "It's just American. I don't know where my parents came from, I don't know the history, I don't know the those things." And I kind of feel bad for them and I want them and I want my, I don't want my kids to do that. I want them to have an identity, know where they came from, and know what it's about and be able to explain it and do that culture that they've that they've been instilled, that I've instilled in them and do it to the fullest of their capabilities which means language and writing and reading and all those different things.**

[A.F. / Age19 / M / Birthplace – Burbank, CA / Father born in Armenia / Mother born in Aleppo, Syria, repatriated to Armenia at age 16 before moving to U.S.]

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Շ: Ok: Երբ որ քեզ հարցնում են ազգության մասին ինչպե՞ս ես պատասխանում:

Լ: Ես ասում եմ հայ, ճիշտն ասած Հայաստանից տուրիստ էր եկել ես վերջերս մեր տուն, եկավ իմ նկարներն էի ցու(յ)ց տալիս, որ Հայաստանում նկարել էի ես



ը շա ուտելիքներ էի նկարել օրինակ՝ ըմ խնկալին, դեղձը, իմ համար ոչ թե նոր մի բան էր, այլ որ Հայաստանում էի գտնվում ամեն ինչ նկարում էի: Էդ նկարները նայեց՝ ասեց. «Էս ամերիկացիները երեւի սիրում են որ ուտելիքներ նկարեն», ես էլ շատ վիրավորվեցի, ասեցի. «Ռազմիկ ձաձա, ինչի՞ էք ասում որ ես ամերիկացի եմ:» Ասեց. «Լավ՝ ամերիկահայ»: Ու էլի մի քիչ նեղվեցի, ասեցի. «Ոչ՝ ես հայ եմ»: So ինձ համարում եմ հայ:

S: Ok. When asked about your ethnicity, how do you respond?

L: I say Armenian. To be honest, recently a tourist from Armenia had come to our house, he came, I was showing him my pictures that I had taken in Armenia and uh I had taken pictures of a lot of food items like uh the dumplings, the peach, it wasn't something new for me, but rather because I was in Armenia I was photographing everything. He looked at those pictures and said, "These Americans probably like taking pictures of food." I got really hurt and said, "Uncle [*uses Russian word дядя, uncle*<sup>52</sup>] Razmik, why are you [*formal use of second person to indicate politeness*] saying that I am an American." He said, "Fine, Armenian-American." And again I was a little bothered. I said, "No, I am Armenian." **So** I consider myself Armenian.

[L.S. / Age 24 / F / Birthplace – Yerevan, Armenia/ Age of arrival – 3]

Էդ ժամանակ որ արձակուրդ, ձմեռվա ձմեռվա ժամանակ որ արձակուրդ գնացի, հորքուրս տատիկիս էր զանգել ասեց ըր Գեորգը, ախպերս, Գեորգը 80 տոկոս հայ ա եւ 20 տոկոս ամերիկացի ա, Արմենը 80 տոկոս ամերիկացի ա 20 տոկոս հայ ա: Ինձի չասեց, տատիկիս ասեց, տատիկս հետո ինձի ասեց: So ասի ok I have to prove them wrong:

That time that break, winter during winter when I went on break, my aunt had called my grandma and said uh Gevorg, my brother, Gevorg is 80% Armenian and 20% American, Armen is 80% American and 20% Armenian. She didn't say it to me, my grandma told me, my grandma told me later. **So** I said **ok I have to prove them wrong**.

[A.F. / Age19 / M / Birthplace – Burbank, CA / Father born in Armenia / Mother born in Aleppo, Syria, repatriated to Armenia at age 16 before moving to U.S.]

The following quotes encapsulate the intrinsic connection between Armenian language and identity, particularly in the negation of this formula, as well as the reduced valuation of American identity.

<sup>52</sup> The Russian words дядя (uncle) and тетя (aunt) along with a person's first name are very commonly used by Eastern Armenian speakers from the Republic of Armenia to address older family friends.

Շ: Ըմ ծնողներդ ուզո՞ւմ են որ քո հայերենը զարգացնես:

Ա: I mean ինձի չեն ասել բայց ես զգում եմ չ չեն ուզում որ ըը իրանց տղան, իրանց հայերենը դժվար էղնի ու զարգացած չի էղնի, ուզում են որ you know ըը սովորած մարդ էղնի էսի որ ու ը ինքը կարա անգլերենով ու հայերենով մեկին վիճել ու ըտենց բաներ կարան ուրիշ հայերի ուրիշ հայ ժողովուրդների հետ խառնվեն ըտենց բաներ որ ը որ չհեր(n)անան էտ հայ ժողովուրդի հետ ու մենակ ամերիկացի էղնի, որ մի քիչ identity ունենա, ու էտ էտ էտ հայերեն culture-ը որ փոքր ենք էս ըը մանավանդ էս քաղաքի մեջ ուզում են որ you know պիտի իմանաս որտե էթե չես իմանում ըտենց հայ ժողովուրդը ըտենց ա նայում քո վրա ոնց որ you know դու հայ չես էթե դու հայերեն լեզուդ բանդ չգիտես so էթե մոռանում էս արդեն օտար էս դառել so դրա համար եմ էս ուզում պահել ու էտ նույն էտ նույն վիճակով իմ ծնողներսն էլ ուզում են որ էս պահեմ:

S: Um do your parents want you to develop your Armenian?

A: **I mean** they haven't said it to me but I feel that they don't don't want that uh their son, their [*uses plural possessive pronoun instead of singular*] Armenian be difficult and not developed, they want that you know this one be an educated person and uh so that he can argue with someone and things like that in English and Armenian, that they can [*uses plural*] interact [*uses verb "to mix"*] with other Armenians, other Armenian peoples and things like that, and that uh that they don't get removed/distanced from that Armenian people [*uses postposition "with" instead ablative case to indicate "from"*] and remain only American. So that he has a bit of identity, and that that that Armenian culture, because we're small/few in this uh especially in this city, they want that **you know**, you have to know [Armenian], 'cause, if you don't know, they look at you like, the Armenian people look at you like **you know** you are not Armenian if you don't know your Armenian language and thing **so** if you forget you have already become a foreigner so that's why I want to keep it and in that same in that same situation my parents also want me to keep/preserve it.

[A.F. / Age19 / M / Birthplace – Burbank, CA / Father born in Armenia / Mother born in Aleppo, Syria, repatriated to Armenia at age 16 before moving to U.S.]

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Ես հայ եմ ու պետք ա իմանալ հայերեն խոսելը, իմ մեր ըմ մեր ըմ մարդկոնց I guess պատմությունը, դրա համար Professor Հովհաննիսյանը դասն էլ վերցրեցի անցյալ քառորդին, ըը էս շատ ըը ամերի ամերիկացի եմ, գիտես ըը եւ էտի ինձի շատ հուզում ա, որովհետեւ տարիների մեջ հայերենս շատ ա իջել եւ անգլերենս ավելի ա բարձրացել, շատ լավ կարող եմ մարդկանց հետ անգլերենով խոսել, վիճել, ըմմ դաս գրել ու խոսել դրա մասին, եւ չեմ կարող հայերենով անեմ: Հայերեն երաժշտությունն էլ լավ չեմ իմանում: Եթե մեկը ասի մի հաստ հայ հայկական երգ երգի, հայկական երգ էլ չեմ իմանում: Գնացի Հայաստան էտ մի ամիսով, եւ ամենը ըմ Փրոֆեսոր Զուբասյանին, ինքը, իրան

ընդեղ հանդիպեցինք որովհետեւ it was study abroad եւ ամեն եկեղեցի որ գնում էինք, ասեց՝ ահ այո մեր Ալինը հիմա մի հաստ հայկական եր երգ ա երգելու: Մի հաստ բան չիմացա: Տեր ողորմյան էլ մի հաստ maybe մի տասը you know measure գիտեի and that's embarrassing: Ըմմ ու ուզու, I just want to: Ուզում եմ որ իմ երեխաներին էլ սովորացնեմ: Ու I wanna carry that on. So..

I am Armenian and it's necessary to speak Armenian, my our uh our um people's [*non-standard genitive plural*] **I guess** history, that's why I took **Professor** Hovannisian's class<sup>53</sup> last quarter, uh I am really uh Ameri American, you know [*conjugated in second person singular/informal*] uh and that bothers me a lot because over the years my Armenian has gone down a lot and my English has increased more, I can speak, argue really well with people in English, um write homework and speak about it, and I can't do it in Armenian. I don't even know Armenian music well<sup>54</sup>. If someone says sing a single Arm Armenian song, I don't even know an Armenian song. I went to Armenia for that one month and everyone um met Professor Chukasszian over there because **it was study abroad** and every church that we would go to, he said: "Ah, yes our Aline will now sing an Armenian song." I didn't know a single thing. I only knew **maybe ten you know measures** of "Lord Have Mercy" **and that's embarrassing**. Umm and I want, I just want to. I want to teach my children as well. And I wanna carry that on. So..

[A.A. / Age 22 / F / Birthplace – Pasadena, CA / Father born in Tehran, Iran / Mother born in Yerevan, Armenia]

In addition to the tensions related to accessing and claiming Armenian identity, divergent language ideologies also lead to a related source of anxiety connected with feelings of guilt and shame, not only for lacking proficiency in Armenian, but also for their subsequent inability to fulfill the moral responsibility of transmitting Armenian heritage through the language.

Repeatedly and ubiquitously heritage speakers expressed an inability to come to terms with the fact that they would be incapable of transmitting Armenian culture, history, language, and all the other features that comprise the Armenian heritage to future generations due to their lack of competence in Armenian. Although the questionnaire used for the interviews included a question

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<sup>53</sup> Professor Hovannisian was the longtime Chair of the Armenian History program at UCLA and the instructor of a series of courses on Armenian history.

<sup>54</sup> This particular respondent was a Music major at UCLA.

toward the end about speakers' desire to teach their children Armenian, preceding questions related to the reasons for learning Armenian and/or the importance of knowing Armenian consistently elicited responses about the obligation to perpetuate Armenian culture across generations. Without exception, speakers raised the issue of transmitting their heritage to their children and the anxiety they experience at the possibility of failing to carry out this critically significant moral obligation. The following are selected responses to questions related to the significance of knowing and studying Armenian:

Երեխեքս պետք ա սովորեն: Բայց էտի շատ դժվար կլինի, հիմա էթե մտածես ըմ մեր տարիքի երեխեքը ոչ մեկը չի կարում նորմալ խոսա: Եթե մի, էթե երեխա պետք ա բերես ոնց հետը խոսաս: Էտի շատ դժվար կլինի իմ համար: Եթե մտածեմ չեմ կարա իրա հետ նորմալ կամ գրագետ խոսեմ: Հիմա իմ ծնողների հետ խոսամ իրանք ինձ կարան ասեն էս ինչը էս ինչ ձեւ է: Բայց էս իրանց էտ պատասխանը չեմ ունենա որ տամ: Շատ տխուր ա, you know:

My children must learn [Armenian]! But that'll be really hard, if you think about um kids our age, no one can speak normally. If a, you are gonna have a kid, how are you going to speak with him/her? That'll be really hard for me. If I think about it, I can't speak with him/her normally or in an educated/literate way. Now when I speak with my parents they can say such and such is like this. But I won't have that answer to give to them [her children]. It's really sad, **you know**.

*[A.K. / Age 19 / F / Birthplace – Abovian, Armenia / Age of arrival – 6 / Parents repatriated from Iran to Armenia]*

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Well, yeah էթե հայ էս, that's part of your culture. So, I think կարեւոր է, որտեւ ու էն մյուս պատասխանին էլ, like that goes with this, like I wanna be able to like իմ երեխեքըը հայերեն իմանան: Ու էթե էս դա չգիտեմ, իրանց ո՞նց պետք է սովորացնեմ: But, yeah...

**Well, yeah** if you are Armenian, **that's part of your culture. So, I think** it's important, 'cause the same with the other answer, **like that goes with this, like I wanna be able to like** my kids to know Armenian. And if I don't know it, how am I going to teach them? **But, yeah...**

*[G.K. / Age 21 / F / Birthplace – Yerevan, Armenia / Age of arrival – 10 months]*

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Ըմմ օհ մյուս պատճառը որ ուզում եմ, էրեխա որ ունենամ, ուզում եմ իրանք էլ հայերեն սովորեն: So որ ես չիմանամ, իրանց ո՞նց եմ սովորացնելու: So էդ դրա համար էլ ասենք թե it is որ continue the language, you know... that's pretty much the main reason.

Umm oh the other reason that I want [to learn Armenian], when I have kids, I want them to learn Armenian too. **So** if I don't know it, how am I going to teach them? **So** for that too let's say, **it is to continue the language, you know...that's pretty much the main reason.**

*[M.K. / Age 19 / F / Birthplace – New York / Family moved to L.A. when she was 3]*

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Էդ սերունդը պահպանելը եւ ասենք որ իմ էրեխեքն էլ թեկուզ հայերեն խոսեն: Եթե ես չկարողանամ խոսել, անպայման էրեխեքս չեն կարողանա ու դա հիասթափելի կլինի:

To preserve that generation and let's say so that even my kids speak Armenian. If I can't speak, my kids will definitely not be able to speak and that will be disappointing.

*[N.S. / Age 22 / M / Birthplace – Gyumri, Armenia / Age of arrival – 3.5]*

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Շ: Ինչո՞ւ է քո համար այդքան կարեւոր, որ էրեխաներդ հայերեն իմանան:  
Պ: Որտեւ իրանք էլ հայ էղնելու ու I mean ես հիմա, օրինակ եթե ասեմ ամիսսում եմ, բայց շատ կուզենայի որ հայերենը փոքրվանից like ուժեղ լիներ, so չեմ ուզի որ իրանք է(լ), որ մեծանան like իմ նման վատ զգան կամ ուզենան որ իրանց հայերենը ավելի լավ, I mean որ փոքր ես շատ չեւ զգում, բայց որ մեծանում ես, it's like I wish I had that opportunity, կուզենայի որ իրանք, իրանք է(լ) անեն...

S: Why is it so important for you that your children know Armenian?

P: 'Cause they're going to be Armenian too and **I mean**, now, for example, if I say that I regret it, but I would've really wanted that my Armenian had been **like** strong from a young age, **so** I wouldn't want them, to grow up and like feel bad too like me or want their Armenian to be better, **I mean** when you are young you don't feel it, but when you grow up, **it's like I wish I had that opportunity**, I would want for them, to do it too...

*[P.G. / Age 19 / F / Birthplace – Montobello, CA / Parents from Yerevan, Armenia]*

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Որտեւ գնալով հասկանում եմ, մենք ինչքան ըր հարուստ պատմություն ունենք ու ծնողներս միշտ ասել են ինձ հայերենը մոռանաք ձեր տարիքի մարդկանց

պատճառով, ոնց որ մեր լեզուն կկորցնենք: Ուղակի ուզում էի փորձել իրանց սխալ ապացուցելի:

‘Cause with time I understand what uh a rich history we have and my parents have always said to me that if you guys forget Armenian, as a result of people your age, we are like going to lose our language. I just wanted to prove them wrong.

*[N.V. / Age 21 / M / Birthplace – Yerevan, Armenia / Age of arrival – 1.5]*

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I mean ուզում ենք ըսենց որ քոլթուրը պահենք էլի that identity that whole definition of identity ուզում եմ էտի պահեմ ըը down the line, generation after generation so որ իմանան որ Ֆստկչանը հայ ա, իրանք հայ են:

**I mean** we want to keep/preserve the culture like that, **that identity that whole definition of identity**, I want to keep/preserve that uh **down the line, generation after generation so** that they know that Fstkchian is Armenian, they are Armenian.

*[A.F. / Age 19 / M / Birthplace – Burbank, CA / Father born in Armenia / Mother born in Aleppo, Syria, repatriated to Armenia at age 16 before moving to U.S.]*

## Conclusion

The analysis of contradictory attitudes concerning the Armenian language among Armenian heritage speakers indicates a situation in which socialization into elevated language ideologies seems to be prioritized over socialization into actual language use. Thus, Armenian heritage speakers embrace extremely strong and powerful sentiments about their language, but as a result of negative attitudes and behaviors regarding the actual use of Armenian, their lacking proficiency creates tensions in reconciling the competing ideologies about their heritage language. On the one hand, such a “positive ethnolinguistic consciousness” comprised of a sense of sanctity, kinship, and moral imperative (Fishman 1996), highlights the deep meaning Armenian has for heritage speakers. However, possessing such a close association between language, ethnic identity, and the moral duty of transmission without the necessary linguistic

proficiency to justify it can function as a double-edged sword highlighting many of the inherent contradictions in such paradoxical formulations.

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSION

#### **Review of Findings and Implications**

This dissertation has introduced Armenian, specifically Eastern Armenian in the Los Angeles context, into the landscape of heritage languages in the U.S. Given the lack of knowledge about Armenian as a heritage language, both in the fields of Heritage Language Research and Armenian Studies, this study has offered the first comprehensive examination of Armenian heritage language speakers in a variety of capacities. Each chapter has presented a dimension of its own, highlighting particular qualities of this group of speakers while expanding knowledge about heritage languages and speakers in general.

Chapter 2 painted the general backdrop of Armenian and Armenians in Los Angeles. It presented vital information about the development and current situation of the Armenian language, highlighting some extremely significant factors as they relate to or impact the situation of heritage speakers. Features such as the pluricentric nature of the language, the divergent orthographies, the highly diglossic situation of Eastern Armenian, the bi- or multilingual contexts of development and use for both standards, and the unique case of the Iranian-Armenian dialect(s) were discussed. Moreover, the history of the multiple waves of Armenian immigration to the U.S. was reviewed, incorporating the demographic presence of Armenians in the U.S., especially in Los Angeles County, with attention to sub-ethnic divisions in this heterogeneous community. The linguistic presence and use of Armenian in Los Angeles was assessed in the realms of social services, media, cultural events, and education (both in the public and private domains). Finally, signs of heritage language loss, particularly among second and third generation Armenian speakers were illustrated based on census data and the evaluation of the



goals and proceedings of multiple Task Forces currently dedicated to enhancing Armenian instruction and promoting Armenian language use in the Los Angeles community.

Although the Armenian community in Los Angeles is quite robust, both in terms of demographic concentration and the prevalence of Armenian in a variety of social contexts, indicating positive conditions for language use and maintenance, several factors must be considered. The community is continuously replenished with ongoing immigration from the homeland and other diasporic centers, swelling the demographic concentration and more importantly, providing an influx of Armenian speakers. This seems to be the largest factor in sustaining and contributing to the vitality of the heritage language. As census data on language use demonstrates, intergenerational transmission is not vigorous, showing a typical pattern of decline among second and third generation speakers. Armenian community schools are struggling in terms of language instruction, partially due to being out of touch with recent demographic changes (i.e. choice of standard as language of instruction) and novel pedagogical approaches (curriculum design, teacher preparation, instructional methods, materials, etc.), not to mention that they only serve a minute portion of the population. Armenian language instruction in the public sector, such as the immersion programs in Glendale Unified School District (GUSD), seems to be more in tune with the developments of the community and updated approaches in education. However, due to their recent establishment it is too early to assess their impact or effectiveness. These programs are extremely fertile domains for future research.

One of the important objectives of this dissertation was to investigate the linguistic features of Armenian heritage speakers; this goal functioned as the driving force behind the decision to conduct the interviews in the heritage language. The knowledge of heritage learners has often been described as “Swiss cheese,” indicating the fact that speakers usually have a grasp

of the general matrix of the linguistic system, but one that is often riddled with gaps. Following this analogy, Chapter 3 revealed the “gaps” in speakers’ knowledge of Eastern Armenian. In the examination of the grammatical fragmentation process among Armenian heritage speakers, this chapter outlined linguistic features in the categories of phonology, morphology, register, and borrowings from English. Several important causative factors were proposed that might contribute to the exhibition of non-target like features. These include the absence of exposure to the formal features of Armenian and the social contexts where these would be employed, the lack of continuous formal education in Armenian, the pluricentric nature of the Armenian language and the active presence of both standards in the Armenian community, and the influence of English as the dominant majority language.

In terms of linguistic features, the results from Eastern Armenian heritage speakers fit the growing profiles of the grammatical system of heritage speakers across various languages. Although phonological competence seems to be the best-preserved aspect of linguistic knowledge in heritage speakers, a “heritage accent” is often discernable, suggesting that even the phonetic system may not be fully developed as a result of incomplete acquisition and attrition (Godson 2004; Benmamoun et al. 2010). This area of heritage speakers’ grammatical systems has been understudied thus far (Benmamoun et al. 2010). The analysis in this chapter revealed that Eastern Armenian heritage speakers demonstrate some phonological deviances that are unique to a heritage pronunciation or accent, confirming that the sound systems of heritage speakers are affected as well. Morphological tendencies to standardize and over-regularize paradigms, and overgeneralize in both form and meaning were also present, corroborating that inflectional morphology is particularly vulnerable in heritage languages (Benmamoun et al. 2013). Lacking competence in higher registers, including deficits in lexical density and syntactic

complexity stood out as another prominent feature among Armenian heritage speakers, corresponding to similar trends across languages. Finally, the impact of language contact and transfer also revealed the frequent occurrence of code switching, entailing the embedding of English content words and discourse markers into the matrix of Armenian.

Although research typically puts forth three main factors that shape heritage grammars: incomplete acquisition, attrition, and transfer from the dominant language (Benmamoun et al. 2013), this chapter offered an additional element, the presence of multiple standards or variants in one community, resulting in divergent and competing input. This is an extremely important dynamic to consider for languages that have multiple standards or variants which are concurrently present in the acquisition process. Also, the influence of the dominant language, in this case English, was persistently suggested and has been considered an important element of transfer. In order to distinguish which features are truly results of transfer as opposed to incomplete acquisition, similar linguistic features should be examined in countries with a different dominant language.

The implications of these results serve both the theoretical and practical realms. Investigation of the grammatical system of heritage speakers enriches theoretical linguistics by examining phenomena that researchers have traditionally studied in children's language use, but with test subjects that are more sophisticated and manageable, as well as testing more complex linguistic relationships (Benmamoun et al. 2010). More practically, there are large benefits to be reaped by the field of language pedagogy in aiding educators to better understand and serve this group of learners. The specific "gaps" outlined among Armenian heritage speakers can become areas of targeted focus during curriculum planning and instruction, strengthening and improving heritage language education programs.

Chapter 4 addressed the topic of language use patterns by designating four domains of linguistic compartmentalization among heritage speakers based on categories of age, gender, medium, and space. Building and expanding on traditional classifications of domains of language use, this chapter considered various categories or triggers that lead to the selection of language among bilingual heritage speakers as well as some potential causes. Given the specific generational status of speakers, data analysis demonstrated that interactions with older interlocutors (who are primarily Armenian dominant) were predominately carried out in Armenian, while communications with those similarly aged or younger mainly occurred in English. In the analysis of gender-related patterns of language use, a general propensity of more Armenian use with and among males stood out in opposition to more English use with and among females. These may be related to gendered patterns of adaptation in the process of settlement in host countries, including varied educational outcomes for youth, all favoring females and perhaps influencing the desire for and selection of more English use. In terms of compartmentalization based on the medium of the language, the heritage language was dominantly employed in the oral realm, with almost no outlet in the written medium. Factors such as traditions of language socialization, the lack of literacy in the heritage language and the resulting limited access to written cultural resources, the scarce availability and use of Armenian fonts in social media outlets, and the ubiquitous presence of the Roman alphabet were presented and discussed as significant driving forces. The final category, designating space as a domain of compartmentalization, demonstrated that in the terms of physical space, there was a clear cut “at home vs. outside” dichotomy, relegating Armenian to limited physical spaces such as the home and specifically designated “Armenian” spaces, while giving English a much wider range. In terms of metaphorical space, defined as the divide between the private/personal and

public/social, Armenian use functioned in the intimate environment of personal conversations, while English was viewed as the most appropriate language for public and social interactions.

The term compartmentalization and compartmentalized language use have often been passingly incorporated in describing the language use patterns of heritage speakers and communities, with almost no existing studies that tackle this issue head on<sup>55</sup>. Although the role of the interlocutor has been addressed in a few studies dealing with domains of language use (e.g. Fishman 1965), more specific characteristics, such as age and gender have not been as thoroughly or directly investigated. The factor of age seems a logical one, given the particular generational status of speakers and the linguistic proficiencies that correlate with the varying generations. Therefore, it would not be surprising if studies among other groups of heritage speakers produced similar results. However, the role of gender in shaping language choice and language use patterns seems more complex and poorly examined. The few studies that do tackle this issue have produced contradictory results (Klee 1987; Solé 1978; Zendella 1997). Interestingly, although female heritage speakers seem to have higher proficiency in the heritage language, males exert more agency in using it. The role of gender is an area worthy of further attention in the examination of language use patterns in heritage language communities.

The issue of compartmentalization based on the medium of the language seems another category that is quite logical, given the fact that one of the defining characteristics of heritage speakers is their lacking literacy. However, some complex factors have been highlighted, enhancing the strict divide between the oral and written medium of language access and use in the Armenian case. The results of this section suggest that attention should be paid to particular

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<sup>55</sup> To my knowledge Kouloujian's (2012; 2014) presentations on linguistic compartmentalization in the Armenian Diaspora are the only exceptions.

traditions of language socialization, indicating that a more literacy-centered socialization process will aid in the development of speakers' overall proficiency as well as literacy competence, providing more access to written linguistic and cultural resources during the course of a speaker's lifetime. Moreover, in the case of Armenian, the graphically unique alphabet, shared with no other language, and quite distinct from the ubiquitous Roman alphabet, plays a large role. Whereas heritage languages that share an alphabet with the dominant majority language have much easier access to literacy (and transfer of literacy skills), languages such as Armenian face a big dilemma in this regard. For example, this factor determined the selection of immersion models in GUSD, with languages that employ the Roman alphabet using the 90/10 model, while those that have a different alphabet employed the 50/50 model. The distinct alphabet coupled with speakers' lacking or limited literacy skills results in a situation where speakers do not access or produce the language in written media, or use the Roman alphabet to do so. The use of Romanized Armenian is currently an issue of intense debate both in the homeland and the Diaspora. I have not come across any academic studies that address this subject either in the Armenian case or for other languages. This is another fruitful domain of investigation for languages that employ distinct writing systems.

The last category of spatial compartmentalization highlights the physical and metaphorical "domestication" of the heritage language (Aparicio 2000), relegating it to the restricted context of the home, the family, and the heritage community, with English functioning as the appropriate language for public use. Raised awareness about linguistic compartmentalization across a variety of domains can influence language policies in communities and educational institutions. For example, Kouloujian describes an explicit campaign to decompartmentalize engrained thematic and temporal categories among his college

students (2014) by assigning tasks that involve writing in Armenian about non-Armenian abstract topics. He also recommends coming up with “distinctive strategies in order to recapture language as place” (2014: 5) and even “persistent intervention in order to rearrange functional diglossia” (2014: 3). As the Task Force currently working on enhancing Armenian use in Prelacy schools puts forth in their Core Values, “The student should not have an ‘Armenian language/Armenian’ world and parallel with it, his/her own ‘real’ world, where the ‘Armenian language and things Armenian’ are missing. The world in its entirety must fit into Armenian” (Task Force Presentation to Board of Regents of Prelacy Schools 02/04/2014). Khatchadourian (2014: 12), in his presentation of the novel pedagogical philosophies of the successful Mgnig Armenian language workshop in Paris, France, echoes the notions above by stating that one of the fundamental conditions in their approach is the view of Armenian as “a language that encompasses all aspects of life.” Perhaps such innovations, both in ideology and practice, will help increase the domains of the heritage language, fostering a more holistic perspective of Armenian.

Chapter 5 introduced a destructive cycle based on the role that family and heritage language community members play on heritage speakers’ ability and desire to speak and develop their heritage language. Building on prominent theories on language acquisition and development, this chapter explored the persistent anxiety connected with using the heritage language and the destructive cycle it generates: teasing and ridicule create a fear of judgment that leads to less interaction in the heritage language, particularly with more competent speakers; reduced interaction means less comprehensible input and therefore, less opportunity to develop the heritage language. The chapter individually considered and assessed the impact of teasing, ridicule, error correction and criticism by more proficient speakers in specific social contexts on

speakers' psychological state and how it hinders acquisition and further development of the heritage language.

The implications of this chapter highlight the role of heritage language community members and the impact of their behaviors on the self-esteem and confidence of heritage speakers to use the language. Presumably family or community members who engage in such actions are not aware of its negative impact. Therefore, raising awareness about this phenomenon and the proven ineffectiveness of error-correction, teasing, humiliation, and embarrassment may help alter behaviors, particularly in educational settings where the heritage language is taught<sup>56</sup>. Given the difficulty of changing an entire community's perspective on language correctness and best-practices during the acquisition and development process, it may be easier to target this problem from the other end, by educating heritage speakers about their own sociolinguistic background and linguistic science in general (Carreira 2000). Helping speakers and learners understand the linguistic legitimacy of their home language, the arbitrary nature of linguistic prejudice, and the inevitability of dialectal variation, will help raise the value of heritage languages for individual speakers (Carreira 2000).

Chapter 6, the final analytical chapter, explored divergent language attitudes that Armenian heritage speakers held, which juxtaposed very positive sentiments about the heritage language with incompatible language behavior in terms of the practical proficiency and use of Armenian. These led to a paradox between the expressed language attitude and the performed language behavior. On the one hand, Armenian heritage speakers espouse very elevated sentiments about the Armenian language comprised of various emotional components, all

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<sup>56</sup> For example, providing workshops for heritage language teachers on alternatives to explicit error-correction such as recasting may greatly improve the learning environment.



highlighting the central role of the Armenian language in the construction, preservation, and perpetuation of Armenian identity, while on the other hand, they face the practical reality of insufficient linguistic capacity as a result of language behavior that devalues Armenian as an instrumental tool. These inconsistent attitudes were investigated with an examination of the impact of competing majority and minority language ideologies. The dominant language ideology of monolingualism in the U.S. was considered along with Armenian diasporic ideologies, which were not homogenous. Instead they fractured along multiple lines, strongly carrying the influence of U.S. ideologies which position English as more prestigious than minority languages and the key vehicle to social acceptance and upward mobility. The chapter concluded with a discussion of the inherent contradictions between the inconsistent attitudes and behaviors, which lead to a state of cognitive dissonance among speakers in their attempt to reconcile the competing attitudes and ideologies.

As Benmamoun et al. (2010) underscore in their White Paper on Heritage Linguistics, “there is a whole untested area of psychological issues experienced by heritage speakers” (79) that demands attention by scholars. Significantly, most studies dealing with the psychological elements that influence heritage speakers focus on the impact of the “otherness” during contact with the dominant culture (Tse 1998; Cho et al. 2004). However, the findings from this study demonstrate that heritage speakers are constantly on the fault line between two cultures, two languages, and two ways of being, struggling with reconciling contradictory elements in their life. They are not only in the role of the “other” in comparison to the dominant culture, but in the heritage community as well, being left without a place to fit in. The essential role that language plays in defining and shaping the identity of heritage speakers deserves further attention.

## **Paths for the Future**

Since this is the first work of its kind, introducing Eastern Armenian to the field of heritage language research, there are many new directions that can be explored. Several have already been indicated in the section above. As highlighted in the introduction to this dissertation, the sample used for this study was a self-selected group. A logical next step would be to expand and vary the sample size within the Eastern Armenian group to include speakers who are not learners (i.e. not enrolled in a language class), speakers of different ages from different demographic and educational backgrounds, and speakers of different generations. These would offer a more nuanced and complex picture of the situation of Armenian speakers in this community.

Naturally, another logical follow-up would be to generate a parallel work examining the sociocultural and linguistic profile of Western Armenian as a Heritage Language in Los Angeles. The expectation is that this type of project will produce certain parallels along with some strikingly different results due to the historically and socioculturally special factors that have shaped the environment of Western Armenian. Features such as the absence of state-support for Western Armenian, its long-time sole existence as a diasporic language, its recent classification as an endangered language, and its contact with Eastern Armenian will profoundly impact the findings of such a study. This type of comparative study will not only illuminate Armenian Studies, but also contribute to the field of Heritage Language Research in demonstrating how particular sociocultural and linguistic features variably impact and shape the status of a heritage language and its speakers.

An equally fascinating extension of this research involves the examination of dialect “bending” or “accommodation” between heritage speakers of Eastern and Western Armenian.

Dialect accommodation describes the linguistic processes that take place in situations when two mutually intelligible varieties of the same language come into contact and result in the transference of features between varieties. Los Angeles serves as an ideal place for such an assessment of dialect accommodation in Armenian because it is home to a wide array of Armenian heritage speakers who are in constant contact. The examination of such interactions and an analysis of the direction(s) of transference will reveal a great deal about the sociolinguistic dynamics of this unique community. In the multitude of directions and paths that can be pursued on this topic, hopefully this dissertation will serve as a good springboard for further development, expansion, and advancement of knowledge.

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A

#### QUESTIONS USED DURING INTERVIEWS

##### Biographic Data:

1. What is your name?
2. How old are you?
3. Where were you born?
4. Where are your parents from? What languages do they speak?
5. At what age did you come to the U.S.? (Where else did you live before coming to the U.S.?) What city did you come to in the U.S.?
6. Who do you live with? Do you have grandparents who live nearby?

##### Education in HL:

7. If born outside of the U.S., did you go to school in the home country? For how long?
8. Did you go to an Armenian day school/Community school/Saturday school in the U.S.? For how long?
9. What was your experience like in Armenian school?
10. Where else did you learn Armenian? (Did your parents/grandparents teach you?)
11. Were you read to in Armenian as a child? Were you told stories, taught poems, songs, etc.?

##### Language Use:

12. Was Armenian your first language?
13. At what age did English become dominant?
14. What other languages do you know or have you studied?
15. What language do you speak at home (with parents, grandparents, siblings, relatives, friends...)?
16. Where and with whom do you use Armenian? Where and with whom do you use English?
17. When and with whom do you feel comfortable using Armenian? Why? When and with whom do you feel uncomfortable using Armenian? Why?
18. Which language do you think in? Which language do you dream in?
19. Do you read and write in Armenian outside of class? When and for what purpose? If not, would you like to?
20. What kind of activities do you do in Armenian (watch TV, listen to music, read newspaper, access internet, speak on the phone, attend church, ...)

##### Language Proficiency:

21. In your opinion, how proficient are you in Armenian?

22. Of the four skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking), how would you rank them from strongest to weakest?
23. Which would you like to improve most?
24. How proficient are you in English?
25. Can you tell/understand a joke in Armenian? Can you be rude? Can you argue in Armenian? Can you be polite? Can you understand a formal talk? Can you write a term paper? Can you understand poetry?

Language Attitude:

26. Why have you honestly enrolled in this class?
27. Is it important for you to know Armenian? Why/why not?
28. Does knowing Armenian benefit your future here or hinder it? How/how not?
29. Does your family (parents, sibling, grandparents...) want you to maintain Armenian?
30. Will you teach Armenian to your children? Why/why not?
31. Is it important for you that your future spouse be Armenian? Is it necessary, desired, or unimportant?
32. How do you self identify? (Armenian, Armenian-American, Iranian-Armenian, Lebanese-Armenian...)

Language Re-learning Strategies:

33. Does your proficiency level in Armenian compared to English concern you?
34. What do you plan on doing to improve your Armenian?
35. Which do you think would be the best methods to teach your children Armenian?
36. How difficult/easy is it for you to study Armenian in a classroom environment?
37. What were your expectations of the Armenian course? Were they met or was the result different?

## APPENDIX B

### BASIC PROFILES OF PARTICIPANTS

Initials	Age	Sex	Birthplace	Parents' Birthplace	Age of arrival to U.S.	Parents' languages	Currently lives with
A.A.	22	F	Pasadena	Father: Tehran, Iran Mother: born in Yerevan, Armenia (Maternal grandmother from Aleppo, grandfather from Lebanon). Father immigrated to U.S. at age 4, mother at age 9.	NA	Armenian, English. Father understands Russian. Mother also knows French, Turkish	Dorms
A.K.	20	F	Yerevan	Armenia Mother: Yerevan Father: Kirovakan (moved to Yerevan to attend university)	3	Armenian, Russian, Father: English (well) Mother: English (somewhat)	Father, mother, older brother
A.H.	19	F	Yerevan	Yerevan	8	Armenian, Russian, English	Mother, father, sister
A.F.	19	M	Burbank	Father: Armenia (born in a village - Kilikia) Mother: born in Aleppo, moved to Armenia at age 16). Both moved to U.S. in 1980.	NA	Armenian, English (father w/ accent) Father: A little Russian, Turkish Mother: A little Arabic	Parents and brother
A.K.	19	F	Abovian, Armenia	Iran Moved to Armenia when they were young – school age	6	Father and mother: Persian, Armenian, English, Russian	Dorms
E.M.	20	F	Glendale	Tehran, Iran. Moved to U.S. in 1978.	NA	Persian, English, Armenian	Mother, father, 2 brothers
G.K.	21	F	Yerevan	Gyumri, Armenia	10 months	Armenian, Russian, English (mother knows last two better than father)	Mother, grandmother, grandfather, uncle, aunt, 2 cousins and sister
G.Z.	19	M	West Covina	Yerevan, Armenia	NA	Parents speak both Armenian standards (E. and W.), English, mother knows Turkish	Lives in the dorms. Over weekends goes home.
K.N.	19	F	Yerevan, Armenia	Yerevan, Armenia	5	Armenian, Russian, English, Father: also knows Turkish	Mother, father, sister who comes over on weekends

							because she dorms at UCSD.
L.A.	20	F	Glendale	Born in Iran, moved to Armenia when father was 2, mother 7. Moved to U.S. in 1989.	NA	Father: Armenian, English, Russian. Mother: Persian, Armenian, English, understands Russian, doesn't speak well	Dorms. Goes home on weekends. Lives with parents and brother.
L.S.	24	F	Yerevan, Armenia	Yerevan, Armenia	3	Mother: Armenian, a little bit of English, understands Russian. Father: Armenian, English, Russian, Turkish	Parents
M.K.	19	F	New York, moved to L.A. at age 3.	Armenia Father: Aresh, Mother: Yerevan Moved to U.S. in 1988	NA	Armenian, English, Russian	Parents, brother, uncle
M.T.	20	F	Yerevan	Yerevan	12 (moved to Russia at age 2, back to Armenia at age 8)	Armenian, Russian, English	Parents, brother
M.T.	18	F	Pales Verdes	Armenia Father: Gyumri Mother: Yerevan Moved to U.S. in 1989	NA	Armenian, English, Russian, a little bit of Spanish	Parents, brother, sister, grandparents, aunt, cousins
N.S.	22	M	Gyumri, Armenia	Armenia Father: Gyumri Mother: Noyemberian.	3.5	Armenian, Russian, English	Parents, brother, grandmother
N.V.	21	F	Yerevan, Armenia	Armenia Father: Yerevan Mother: Gavar	1.5	Armenian, Russian, English	Parents, sister, brother
P.G.	19	F	Montebello	Yerevan, Armenia Moved to US in 1990/91	NA	Armenian, a little Russian, English	Parents, brother, grandfather
R.L.	21	M	Tbilisi, Georgia	Georgia	At age 3 moved to Russia, at age 9 moved to US.	Armenian, Russian, Georgian, English. Mother knows French as well.	Parents
S.S.	22	F	Glendale	Iran Moved to Armenia at age 6/7. Moved to U.S. in 1972/73.	NA	Armenian, English, a little Persian.	Parents, sister
S.M.	22	F	Tehran, Iran	Tehran, Iran	7	Armenian,	Parents, brother

						Persian, English	
S.V.	21	F	Yerevan	Yerevan	4 months	Armenian, a little English, father knew Russian well because he lived in Russia for 17 years, mother a little.	Mother
S.M.	20	F	Yerevan	Yerevan	7.5	Armenian, Russian, English	Parents and 2 brothers
T.Y.	21	F	Yerevan	Armenia, Yerevan	1 year 8 months old	Armenian, Russian, English. Mother: understands German and Turkish.	Parents
T.S.	21	F	Gyumri, Armenia	Gyumri, Armenia	15	Armenian, Russian, understand English a little	Father, sister
V.A.	21	M	Yerevan	Armenia: Mother: Yerevan Father: Parp	1 year 2 months	Armenian, Russian, a little English.	Parents
Y.G.	20	M	Woodland Hills	Father: Yerevan, Armenia Moved to U.S. at age 20. Mother: - New Jersey (not Armenian)	NA	Mother – English. Father – Armenian, English, a little Russian.	Parents, sister



## APPENDIX C

### BORROWED WORDS AND PHRASES FROM ENGLISH

Academic / College life			
4 Point O*	English	Medical school	Schedule
Academia	ESL*	Metaphor	Science
Activity	Essay	Middle school	Semester
After school program	Expectations	Part-time	Short story
Analysis	First grade	Pass	Sign up
Apartment	Foreign language	Poetry	Sociology
Argument	Formal Education	Political	Spanish
Assignment	GPA*	Political article	Speech
Autobiography	High school	Private school	Structure
Campus	History	Professor	Study abroad
Chapter	Identity	Project	Summer school
Cheat	Intermediate	Prose	Sunday school
Class	Intro	Prove my point	Syllabus
Classics	Kindergarten	Psychology	Terminology
College	Language requirement	Public	Test
Community college *	Latin	Publish	Tutor
Crosswords	Lecture	Quarter	Tutoring
Culture	Level	Research	UC San Diego
Dictionary	Literal	Research paper	Unit (in academic setting) *
Elective	Literature	Roommate	Valedictorian*
Elementary school	Magnet *	Russian	Vocabulary
Encyclopedia	Major	Satire	

*\*(No comparable counterpart in Armenian)*

Language			
Accent	Font	Proficient	Stumble
Automatic	Formal	Punctuation	Stutter
Communicate	Formal/informal	Secondary language	Tagalog
Conversational	Foundation	Sentences	Translate
Declension	Grammar	Skill	Verb
Delivery	Heritage	Spanish	
Detect	Literate	Spelling	
Dual	Phrase	Street language	

## Media & Entertainment / Technology

Advertisements	Download	Media	Pop
Cd	Email	Melody	Reporter
Cell Phone	Folk Music	News	Soap Opera
Channel	Keyboard	On-line	Tape
Cinematography	Laptop	Phone	TV
Classical Music	Lyrics	Phone book	Website

## Discourse Markers

Actually	I mean	Like	That's it
And stuff	I think	She goes/I am like/ I was like*	Yeah
Basically	I'd say	So	You know
I don't know	I'll say	So like	You know what I mean

\*(Introductions to direct speech)

## Other

Acquaintance	Everyday	Maybe	Put into practice
Active	Exactly	Most	Put them forward
Although	Exchange	Necessarily	Quote-unquote
Always	Expectations	Nervous	Radiology office
Annoying	Experience	Never	Realize
Anyway	Extractions	Obvious	Really
Appropriately	Extreme	Obviously	Reason
Awkward	Fictional	Of course	Respect
Basic	Figure out	Offend	Restaurant
Catholic	Flat out	Open minded	Secret
Chiropractor	Focus	Opportunity	Selectively
Classical	For the most part	Option	Separate
Comedy	Frame	Organization	Sequence
Community	Fund raiser	Overall	Sign
Completely	Fundamental	Paperwork	Simple
Compliment	Generally	Parameter	Social situation
Conflict	Generation	Patient	Some
Confusing	Hopefully	Patriotic pride	Sometimes
Contact	Identity	Personal	Soon
Conversation	Impressed	Perspective	Spark
Conviction	Improved	Physically	Stress
Cousin	In general	Political aspirations	Struggle
Creative	In that sense	Popular	Subconsciously

Customers	Interbreeding	Practical	Surprised
Date someone	Intimidate	Practically	Time-consuming
Debate	Investments	Prefer	To be honest
Definitely	It speaks volumes	Preserve	Token
Definition	Judge	President	Typical
Depends	Just	Pressure	Usually
Depends on	Label	Probably	Western/Eastern
Dyslexic	Let's say	Problem	Whatever
Environment	Mainly	Professional	
Especially	Majority	Proper	
Even though	Manager	Prove	

## APPENDIX D

### EASTERN ARMENIAN VOWEL AND CONSONANTAL SYSTEM AS REPRESENTED IN THE INTERNATIONAL PHONETIC ALPHABET (IPA)

	Front		Central	Back	
	Unrounded	Rounded		Unrounded	Rounded
Close	i				u
	ɨ				ɯ
	ɪ				ʊ
Mid	ɛ		ə		ɔ
	ɛ̄, ɛ̆ <sup>[3]</sup>		ɛ̄		ɛ̄, ɔ̄ <sup>[3]</sup>
	e, ē		ē		o, ò
Open				ɑ	
				ɯ	
				a	

		Bilabial	Labiodental	Alveolar	Post-alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Uvular	Glottal
Nasal		m (մ)		n (ն)					
Stop	aspirated	p <sup>h</sup> (փ)		t <sup>h</sup> (թ)			k <sup>h</sup> (ք)		
	voiceless <sup>[4]</sup>	p (պ)		t (տ)			k (կ)		
	voiced	b (բ)		d (դ)			g (գ)		
Affricate	aspirated			ts <sup>h</sup> (ց)	tʃ <sup>h</sup> (չ)				
	voiceless			ts (ծ)	tʃ (ժ)				
	voiced			dʒ (ձ)	dʒ̥ (ջ)				
Fricative	voiceless		f (ֆ)	s (ս)	ʃ (շ)			χ (խ)	h (հ, յ) <sup>[5]</sup>
	voiced		v (վ, լ, ռ, ղ) <sup>[6]</sup>	z (զ)	ʒ (ժ)			ʁ (ր)	
Approximant						j (յ, ե, ի, է) <sup>[8]</sup>			
Tap				ɽ (ր) <sup>[7]</sup>					
Trill				r (ր)					
Lateral				l (լ)					

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