Supporting Online Learning in an Unfamiliar Language: Immigrant Parents and Remote Schooling during COVID-19

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ABSTRACT: The sudden burst of COVID-19 and the shift to remote schooling have posed a special challenge for families whose first language is not English. Engaging in a narrative inquiry, I tell stories of parents from three Chinese immigrant families and how they coped with young children's remote schooling during COVID. I present the challenges immigrant parents face and the strategies they adopt to support their children. This inquiry offers useful insights into remote schooling during the pandemic by adding perspectives from immigrant parents, who can provide opportunities for educators to learn how to better support minoritized students.

KEYWORDS: COVID-19, parent knowledge, immigrant parents, online schooling, narrative inquiry.

My daughter Molly was five and in her second term of kindergarten when her school announced a temporary closure due to COVID-19. I recall myself looking forward to "home-schooling" Molly because "how hard could kindergarten work be?" – a thought I would regret having later – and I was working from home so physically the arrangement made a lot of sense at that moment. My husband and I sat down and transformed the large chalkboard in the living room into "Molly's Home-school Calendar" with each of us taking on certain academic responsibilities such as English, Math, Art, and Physical Education. We imagined a peaceful, joyful, and meaningful teaching and learning experience in the "home classroom" while bonding with our child. I have a master's degree in education and am working toward a doctoral degree focusing on young children's language education. I also had rich experience teaching school-aged young learners. So,

there was no reason for me to question my ability to take on the teacher's role in the home setting and do a great job assisting Molly's kindergarten teacher's curriculum practices. The first day I even posted on social media showing my solid confidence and high expectations.

Oh, how naive I was! Reality hit us hard. Only three days later, I realized it was not a workable plan. With time, the list of reasons why we could not do this (or at least do it well) kept growing longer and longer.

Both my husband and I were physically at home when Molly's school closed. However, when we made the calendar, we forgot about one significant fact: we were home because we had to work at home – both of us had full-time jobs. Sticking to the "Home-school Calendar" became an unreachable dream. Or should I say it was an out-of-reach plan even in the womb? The sudden and unprecedented breakout of COVID-19 caught everyone unprepared. In our family, it certainly took a while for us to get a clear look at the new and hard reality. Forget about the rich learning activities we planned for Molly. Attending to her school assignments alone was a challenging task – my husband and I juggled our working hours and Molly's learning time trying to squeeze everything into the shared family timetable, which became a conflicting messy blob after a while.

Finally, we decided to retreat from the ideal image of "managing to do it all" parents. I wiped the chalkboard clean and returned it to Molly and her 2-year-old sister Luna as the canvas for their free creation of art and scribbles. We rearranged our time to make sure that each adult got a half-day working and a half-day learning with the kids. By learning with the kids, I mean supporting Molly's online schooling such as helping with Zoom meetings, videotaping her physical education activities, typing her assignments on SeaSaw, and so on, while keeping watching and engaging Luna and returning emails from work. A true image of parents in pandemic!

Compared to my husband, who was developing his English language skills, I shouldered more responsibilities for Molly's online schooling and communications with her teacher. I found myself spending a lot of time reading instructions for the assignments, typing on the phone to respond and comment on 5-year-old Molly's behalf, and making plans to accommodate her teacher's curriculum agenda and our family timetable. The feeling of exhaustion and uncertainty was constant in my head.

Questions of Wonder

My experience as an immigrant parent during remote schooling and the overwhelming emotions that stemmed from it left me with so many questions. The COVID-19 pandemic forced widespread K to 12 school closures in the spring of 2020 to protect the well-being of society. Online learning and the hybrid delivery model, which combine online and classroom learning, have become a new normal. Supporting online schooling is difficult for every parent. In particular, remote schooling poses a special challenge for families whose first language is not English. For these families, linguistic barriers (for example, limited literacy in the language of the medium or platform) and economic limitations (for example, lack of broadband internet at home or dated devices)

often prevent them from being able to actively participate in online learning (Lozano & Izquierdo, 2019). Immigrant parents with young children face even more challenges since they have to devote more time and energy to help young learners from lower grades as they require more assistance from parents to navigate the online learning systems.

In this paper, I inquire into the question: How are immigrant parents coping with their young children's remote learning in the new era of the pandemic? As homes become part of the schooling landscape and as parents become (willingly or not) part of the education team I wonder:

1. What specific challenges do immigrant parents face when supporting their children's online learning?
2. What are the strategies immigrant parents adopt to support their young children's online learning in a language that they are not familiar with?
3. Are there new ways of communication, collaboration, and support between immigrant parents and schools?

Immigrant Parents during COVID-19 and Online Schooling

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, people have been affected in one way or another. The lives of individuals of all trades and ages have been strongly affected by countrywide lockdowns all over the world (Bhamani et al., 2020). The outbreak has also influenced worldwide education systems and has changed the lives of 1,576,021,818 students in 188 nations (UNESCO, 2020). The lockdowns have raised an unprecedented threat to the continuity of learning for children, youths, and adults. Different steps to deal with the educational crisis have been implemented by schools in different countries (Bhamani et al., 2020). Since schools closed in March 2020, the school boards within the city of Saskatoon, Canada, has provided interactive online classes for all students for social interaction and to facilitate the continuation of education (Modjeski, 2020). While the measures are considered sufficient to resolve the need for schooling at this time, they have given parents who work from home a tough routine, assuming that parents have the time and devotion to lead the learning processes of their children during COVID-19 (Bhamani et al., 2020).

Supporting Online Learning

Supporting online schooling at home to replace in-person classroom schooling is a sudden burden for all parents and adds a particular weight on immigrant parents whose first language is not English. Many replacement online classrooms operate exclusively in the language of the school (i.e., English, in most cases) (Cioè-Peña, 2021a). In contrast, students who come from immigrant families may only be able to get support from parents or caretakers who speak languages other than English. Due to this situation, remote schooling conducted only in English without taking into account the home language may leave parents feeling unprepared, uninformed, and overextended (Cioè-Peña, 2021a). Consequently, despite the fact that remote schooling provides services for children within

their home environment, it maintains the school community as an independent entity from the home (Schwartz et al., 2020).

At the same time, parents are expected to immediately take on a large role in the school-family partnership during this sudden pandemic outbreak. Parents and teachers become co-facilitators where one could not function without the other (Garbe et al., 2020). Parents are asked to manipulate the remote teaching platform without any technical training; to not only take care of their children's physical, emotional, and social needs but to also teach the school curriculum at home without any proper training; to bridge the communication gaps between teachers and children since interactions are moved online and young children do not have the ability to fully navigate online tools. These tasks are just a few among many that parents are expected to immediately execute effectively despite their varying levels of readiness. This parental readiness depends on, for immigrant parents particularly, the rapid growth of remote schooling opportunities, the disproportionate access to computers and technology within homes and communities, and the diversity of linguistic, economic, and cultural backgrounds of these families (Trollip, 2021). Since most immigrants are not native speakers of the official language in their host countries, lack of ability in the official language is often seen as an obstacle by schools and parents (Zhong & Zhou, 2011). As a result, communication between home and school becomes less frequent and comprehensive (Ji & Koblinsky, 2009). Immigrant parents are prevented from participating and helping their children navigate the system better by the lack of language support in schools (Sohn & Wang, 2006). Often, second language learners are regarded as inadequate from the perspective of teachers, so parents with low proficiency in the dominant language are also considered incompetent (Hajisoteriou & Angelides, 2016). Immigrant parents report that they often feel ill-informed and crave more school support (Cioè-Peña, 2021a). Cummins (2000) reminded us:

> [I]f ability to speak English and the knowledge of North American cultural conventions are made prerequisites for "parental involvement," then many of those parents will be defined as apathetic and incompetent and will play out their pre-ordained role of non-involvement. (p. 8)

Being unaware of school norms and unfamiliar with the dominant language, immigrant parents face great challenges when supporting their children's schooling. During COVID-19, immigrant parents may face increased difficulties as they have conflicting schedules and do not have access to interpreting services, lack knowledge of the technology and various platforms schools use, and may struggle navigating English and home language.

Parents' Role in Education

The pandemic forced parents to walk into this role of "teaching assistant at home" that they did not sign up for. They have a sacred role as parents but were, in many instances, thrust into a "teaching" role for which they were not trained nor did they have expertise. Pushor (2012) pointed out that there are foundational and fundamental differences between education and schooling, and we should understand schooling to be only one aspect of a child's lifelong care and education. From the day a child is born,

probably until the end of life, parents educate their children on a daily basis, in home and community settings, through intimate conversations, story times, family activities, outdoor plays, movie nights, laughter and tears, conflicts and fights, hugs and kisses, and so on and so forth. Parents are "educators" of their children in natural and authentic ways, not usually as professionals who are knowledgeable about curriculum, instructional strategies, pedagogy, assessment, etc. The formalized and, for the most part, mandated nature of schooling allow educators to see schools as "the site of 'main game'" (Cairney & Munsie, 1992, p. 1) and, in the meantime, ignore the value and even existence of the informal education parents provide outside of the school landscape. However, the global pandemic and the challenges that came along with it opened our eyes to see that school is not the only site nor the main site of the education game.

Acknowledged or not, parents have been star players in the game all along. From their natural role as educators and nurturers, they gain parent knowledge and apply such knowledge in their children's education every day. Pushor (2015) directed us to understand that "[g]iven the particular nature of the connectedness within this caregiver-care receiver relationship, there are elements to parent knowledge, aspects of it, which are constructed, held, and used in unique ways" (p. 36). Parents know their children in the most intimate and close manner. The knowledge they possess about their children's personality, interests, life habits, learning mechanisms, and so much more is knowledge that no one else in the world can access. Pushor (2015) stressed that parent knowledge is vital within the learning context. Given this information, parent knowledge should be even more valuable during this pandemic when parents are forced into remote teaching and learning with their children. Parents or caregivers have profound and rich knowledge of their children in the dynamic context of the family. It is obvious that when children are at home living and learning with their parents there should be a place for parents to voice their experience, knowledge of children, hopes, dreams, struggles, challenges, and so much more.

What parents can bring to their children's learning is not what they typically have been asked to bring by schools. It is true that children's continuum of education is essential during this global pandemic. However, my questions are: What kind of education should we seek amid the unusually challenging time and how can we enrich education by acknowledging and inviting the knowledge that parents already have?

Immigrant Parent Knowledge

Parents who immigrate from other countries hold a particular kind of knowledge – immigrant parent knowledge (Guo, 2012). In sharing her transcultural family stories, Khan (2018) stated that immigrant parent knowledge "of social, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, economic, geographical, navigational, ideological differences and experiences of immigration, integration, settlement, interaction with various institutions, and their non-stop existence of duality are some of the assets and gifts they hold" (p. 190). Hoerder et al. (2006) conceptualized that the extent to which parents share knowledge with their children may be modeled as *Transcultural Knowledge Construction*, whereby individuals in immigrant societies adapt to the new world through integrating diverse cultural ways of life into dynamic new ones. This may include aspects of culture, language, ethnicity,

religion, and so forth. The absence of appreciating such transcultural knowledge may lead to misinterpretation of students' behaviors, which may negatively impact immigrant children and their parents.

When moving from their home country to the host country and gaining a new title of “immigrant parents,” parents bring a rich fund of cultural knowledge that they transfer to their children as a critical piece of their cultural identity (Khan, 2018). In the meantime, members in immigrant families immediately begin to integrate their existing cultural knowledge with the newly learned local cultures, and thereby form an ever-changing, ever-adapting, and complex mixture of diverse cultural knowledge. This creative and novel form of cultural knowledge can provoke challenges within the taken-for-granted Eurocentric schooling environment, which might lead to opposition and discrimination in terms of whose knowledge counts (Hoerder et al., 2006).

Immigrant parents also possess a wealth of linguistic knowledge, which is closely tied with their cultural knowledge since language is beyond knowing vocabulary labels and conceptual meanings. It is through their heritage language that “linguistically diverse students maintain their long-distance family ties, community links, cultural practices, beliefs and traditions” (Khan, 2018, p. 196). Given the dominant status of English, parents in immigrant families are the most significant and accessible source of heritage language support for immigrant children. The linguistic knowledge, including knowledge of English, heritage language, and translanguaging[1] (García & Li, 2014), is considered a form of capital in immigrant communities. However, a shift in mindset for schools and educators is still necessary to see immigrant parents and their linguistic knowledge as capacity-based rather than the common perception of deficit-based (Khan, 2018). Linguistically diverse students will have better opportunities to succeed if educators see immigrant parents’ unique strength and work with them in more considered ways.

Immigrant parents bring their values, language, culture, religion, and educational backgrounds to schools, enriching the educational environment (Guo, 2012). Unique immigrant parent knowledge is a valuable resource for children’s education that cannot be found elsewhere. For example, when collaborating in online learning activities, parents are the most important source of comfort in easing young children’s anxiety and worry by providing emotional support in intimate ways at times of uncertainty (Wang et al., 2020). Systematically mobilizing such knowledge in children's learning, especially in remote classrooms, would encourage meaningful ties between curricular goals and the family, thereby improving linguistic and social experiences of immigrant students, and in turn helping to ease the transition for immigrant families from in-person to remote learning.

Context and Method

This inquiry aims to explore the experiences of immigrant parents in supporting their children’s online learning during COVID-19. From March 20, 2020, all pre-K to 12 public schools in Saskatchewan were closed indefinitely in response to the global COVID-19 pandemic. Education officials, school divisions, and teachers worked together to implement a supplemental curriculum program utilizing alternative learning and distance learning (Giles, 2020). During the course of one week, all classes were canceled, and

students had to stay home with their parents and/or caregivers. This change affected every school-aged child and their parents in the province of Saskatchewan, including the participants in this inquiry who live in the city of Saskatoon.

Narrative inquiry is the most suitable method for this project because it allows the inquirer to explore the phenomenon "not only on individuals' experience but also on the social, cultural and institutional narratives within which individuals' experiences are constituted, shaped, expressed, and enacted" (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 42). Narrative inquiry also reminds us that our participants are always in the midst of their lives and everything happens in a certain space (Clandinin & Caine, 2013). Time and space particularly matter in this inquiry, for families are coping with unexpected circumstances during a pandemic and in the space of their homes.

Participants

This inquiry is part of a teaching and learning project that was done in a graduate practicum class as a course assignment. Therefore, it was exempt from the need for ethical approval by the University of Saskatchewan's Behavioral Research Ethics Board. It was an undertaking for the purpose of learning as a graduate student. Nonetheless, I carefully attended to ethical considerations in inquiry preparation and undertook this work in an ethical manner.

Before the inquiry, recruitment messages were posted on social media. Many parents in Saskatoon expressed interest in participation. After an initial meeting with each candidate, where I explained the purpose and process of the inquiry and exchanged scheduling expectations, three Chinese immigrant mothers – Peiyu, Yang, and Lele (all names are pseudonyms) – consented to join me in this narrative inquiry. All of them have experienced alongside their young children the sudden shift of learning format from in-person to online during the pandemic. These parents' English language skills and education backgrounds are at different levels. The school grades of the children in these immigrant families ranged from kindergarten to grade 3.

I had a three-hour-long authentic conversation with each parent individually in October 2020, six months after schools in Saskatoon announced a change to online schooling. In every meeting, in person or via video chat online, we chatted, shared, laughed, and sometimes sat in reflective silence in our shared first language – Mandarin-Chinese – for the purpose of thorough understanding, effective communication, and most of all a deep sense of connection. Conversations were not driven by predetermined scripts; rather, general guiding questions helped frame the conversations: 1) Please share with me your overall experience of supporting your child's remote learning? 2) What specific work are you doing to support your child's remote learning? 3) What kind of communication is happening between you and your child's teacher?

The exchange of ideas and storied experiences between the participating parents and myself led our conversations. After each meeting, I translated the recorded conversations into English as initial field texts[2]. I later analyzed the field texts within their individual, social, cultural, and linguistic context to compose the inquiry text.

Positionality of the Inquirer

I am a Chinese immigrant who moved to Canada four years ago and has been pursuing a PhD focused on immigrant parent knowledge and heritage language education. I am a researcher, a student, a teacher educator, and a mother. In these roles, I have lived and seen first-hand the unique capacity and strength of linguistically diverse families, despite the institutional deficit narrative that is pervasive. This experience has enabled me to witness and partake in knowledge systems that are not always accepted as valid (enough), and yet hold much importance and value for minoritized families and communities. My lived experience urged me to challenge the taken-for-granted logic about race, language, knowledge, and lifeways by pursuing first an MEd and then a PhD in education.

Representing and interpreting another's voice is not a simple task and needs to be done with respect and humility. I entered the relationship with my participants as an insider as I am also a Chinese immigrant parent with young children and I also have experience with supporting online learning. In the meantime, I was conscious that my English language level and my academic background provided me an easier and different experience. It was clear that each family experienced the pandemic and school closure in their own unique ways. Each story deserves to be heard and lessons of these stories should be considered when educational decisions are made.

In the following sections, I will share the storied experiences of these parents and unpack their stories through the lens of academic literature and the eyes of the parents themselves, for the purpose of revealing powerful discourses and evoking resonance. Inquiring narratively provided me with the opportunity to go beyond the search for the one "standard answer" and to examine the particularity and uniqueness in individual storytelling. Byrne-Armstrong (2001) reminded us that "the interpretation we call truth is the one that is attached to power" (p. 113). My narrative analysis of the multiple voices in immigrant parents' stories aims to bring to the forefront the often silenced and unheard voices in the education setting.

Yang's Story of Experience

Yang warmly welcomed me into her house and we had a nice long conversation by her kitchen table. I learned that she is a mother of two boys – the older son is in high school and the younger one is in Grade 3. Her family has been living in Canada for a few years. Mandarin-Chinese is the main language they use to communicate with each other at home, though sometimes the boys prefer to speak English when adults are not involved in the conversations.

Yang talks in a confident and enthusiastic manner, passionately sharing her experiences and opinions. She talked fast and politely paused when I threw in some quick comments. When our chat moved into the topic of communication with teachers at school,

her facial expression shifted from relaxed to a bit nervous. It was so subtle I almost missed it. She looked into my eyes and asked,

> Is it silly for me, a grownup to feel terrified to speak with the teacher? It's not that the teacher herself is scary as a person. She is very nice actually. Just sometimes I hesitate before speaking up, wondering whether it is a stupid question to ask, whether it is something that everyone else already knows – a common sense. And here I am asking it like some kind of stranger or outsider. (Translated recorded conversation, October 8, 2020)

A number of similar moments from my own experience jumped into my head. I did not have an answer for her question because I had been puzzling over the exact same thing for years. So, after her words, I sat in silence for a few long minutes letting those moments run through me, along with the far away yet very close emotions of those moments. I wondered whether Yang was doing the same thing since she did not press me for a response.

Yang gathered herself together and led our conversation into the pandemic. It was a change that called for adaptation from both children the parents. Yang told me that it took her a minute to wrap her head around what was going on in the world and what it meant for her family. Then, the first thing she did was to maintain calm herself. "Having to stay home all the time was stressful not only for the kids but also for my husband and me. I believed that only when I was calm, could I provide care and comfort to my sons" (Translated recorded conversation, October 8, 2020). The second thing she did was to play with her sons to be with them. "We played cards and chess, went to the park. These activities became more important than schoolwork (Translated recorded conversation, October 8, 2020). Yang noticed that the school closure was particularly challenging for the younger boy. Her high-school son already had an established circle of friends who were familiar with online chatting and videoing. The lack of social interactions with his peers during remote schooling caused a lot more anxiety and pressure for the third-grader. "My top priority became creating a relaxing home atmosphere for everyone. I did not want to add more stress to him. This was not an 'academic-focusing' year" (Translated recorded conversation, October 8, 2020).

Peiyu's Story of Experience

Peiyu is a mother of a first-grade boy. She obtained a PhD of Art in China before their family moved to Saskatoon in 2017. Her son had a year of kindergarten and about six months of grade 1 experience in the classroom before the pandemic. We made an online video arrangement in the evening to cater to her busy schedule at home. We started with small talk about our days mothering and teaching at home. Implicit smiles were exchanged. There was no need to say aloud how tired we were at the end of the day and how effortless it was to be able to chat in Chinese. Peiyu said to me that she would not agree to participant in the inquiry if the conversations were conducted in English. Naturally, that led us to talk about languages.

Being a parent of an "emergent bilingual" (García, 2009) child who is building his

English language capacity, Peiyu's biggest concern was her son's language development. As she said,

> My son now is in a critical age of developing language skills. But online school gives very limited one-on-one interactive time. He has little opportunity to practice oral English with his teacher or peers. His oral ability in English has dropped significantly during the time of online school. (Translated recorded conversation, October 9, 2020)

She was not so concerned about the subjects or content in her son's schoolwork. Her educational background grants her confidence in tutoring elementary homework. However, she does the tutoring a bit differently than parents from the dominant culture.

> A lot of times I used Chinese to explain his schoolwork, help him understand the instructions. I might not be able to fully explain in English. So, it is easier for me to help him in my first language and for him to better understand the schoolwork. (Translated recorded conversation, October 9, 2020)

When asked whether she felt the same level of confidence communicating with the teacher, Peiyu showed a hint of frustration. She told me that there were not many opportunities to talk to the teacher directly. If the teacher did not initiate the communication, she was not sure when would be the best time and what would be the best way to start communication herself. Then she added "even when I got the chance to speak with the teacher, say during a parent-teacher conference, I was only able to express myself 60% at most, due to the short meeting time and English being my second language" (Translated recorded conversation, October 9, 2020).

Lele's Story of Experience

Lele impressed me as a highly productive person. Even though there was a screen between us, I could see her intelligence, grit, and effectiveness. She is a mother of two young children. Her three-year-old son is in daycare exploring learning and play in a new English world. Her five-year-old daughter is a quadrilingual kindergartner – their family's first language is Kazakh; the little girl learned Chinese at a very early age and it basically became one of her two first languages; English and French joined her "full linguistic repertoire" (Otheguy et al., 2015, p. 281) after their family moved to Canada and she entered a French immersion kindergarten. Lele has to travel among four languages on a daily basis to support her daughter in everyday activities and schoolwork. Lele's husband is still developing his English language skills and has not attended to French yet. Therefore, she is the sole parent who has the language ability to assist with her daughter's online schooling.

> With online schooling, parents are taking 50% of the workload. I have to communicate with the teacher in English, which is my third language; and support my daughter's learning in French, which is my fourth language. Being the only parent who can support her learning in languages other than our home language, I feel a tremendously heavy burden. I basically became the extended arms and hands of the teacher at home. (Translated recorded conversation, October 16,

2020)

Lele shared in our conversation that she must

> go online and check Google Classroom every day, print off the learning materials, sit with my daughter and read the instructions for her, work on the homework with her, record her work and upload it to the online system, and any other tasks assigned by her teacher. All in English and French, my third and fourth languages." (Translated recorded conversation, October 16, 2020)

She showed great understanding and appreciation of her daughter's teacher. "I'm not complaining," she added, "I'm just exhausted."

Quarantine was hard for families with young children. In consideration of safety, Lele's family stayed inside the house for a whole month after the pandemic was declared in March 2020. She said,

> Finally, we decided it couldn't work this way. So, we organized Zoom play dates with the kids' friends from the Chinese language school. They were able to chat freely in both English and Chinese. At least this way they had some social experiences. (Translated recorded conversation, October 16, 2020)

Language carries significant meaning for Lele's family. She has always encouraged the kids to speak in their first language. "Kazak is a minority language spoken by a small group of people. It's not easy to maintain the language with just their dad and I speaking it in their environment" (Translated recorded conversation, October 16, 2020). They sought community connections during the pandemic isolation by taking advantage of the rapidly developing use of technology. "During COVID, the isolation brought our people all over Canada together and we created an online community. My daughter and son met other children in our community and started to feel connected to identity and language" (Translated recorded conversation, October 16, 2020).

Unpacking Yang's, Peiyu's, and Lele's Living and Telling

I stared at my field texts for a long while after the conversations I had with the parents. In my laptop there were transcribed and translated recorded conversations, notes I jotted during our meetings, and reflections after the conversations. I stared at the stories of immigrant parents in the middle of a global pandemic and I saw myself in them. The field texts and this inquiry text are not me as the inquirer writing about what happened in these three families. They are "co-compositions that are reflective of the experiences of researchers and participants" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 47), for all of us walked into this inquiry in the midst of our lives, formed a relationship, and walked out of the inquiry with enriched knowings. Clandinin (2013) notes that individual narratives of experience are always embedded in social, cultural, familial, linguistic, and institutional narratives. With that in mind, I now turn to unpacking these lived and told stories, aiming to understand and help the reader understand the experiences of Yang, Peiyu, and Lele situated within the context of families, communities, and a global pandemic.

Communication Barriers

Remote instruction increased students' opportunities to learn within the home and with their parents. The sudden outbreak of the COVID pandemic did not allow teachers and schools to fully prepare for the transition; thus, they did not comprehensively consider students' home language practices when developing curriculum designated for online delivery, whether synchronous or asynchronous (Cioè-Peña, 2021a). For immigrant students, English is highly unlikely to be their sole or primary language of communication at home, despite their capacity for using English at school or in a classroom. When English is not central to the students' linguistic practice it is also likely that their parents might not be able to provide support in English (Cioè-Peña, 2021b). In fact, all three parents shared in their narratives that they felt anxious and insecure when English is the only possible language for oral communication with the teacher. The remote environment magnified long-existing challenges.

Even being very highly educated and having efficient English language capacities, Peiyu found herself needing more time to think over what she wanted to say in English before opening up. The short time frame during a teacher-parent conference, particularly online, added an extra layer of pressure. Without the in-person aids of facial expressions, gestures, eye contact, and other non-verbal cues, the screen between her and her son's teacher made real-time oral interactions in English a dreadful experience. Yang's statement also confirmed that communication barriers are beyond language abilities. There are various complex factors contributing to the challenges immigrant parents face when talking to their children's teachers.

Research shows that from the perspective of educators, parents with low proficiency in the dominant language are often seen as deficient (Hajisoteriou & Angelides, 2016). This deficit perception narrows the opportunities for parent-teacher communication. In addition to the linguistic aspect, being seen as less culturally competent reflects a power imbalance between mainstream culture (usually the white, middle-class culture) and minority cultures in terms of "whose knowledge counts" (Pushor & Murphy, 2010, p. 27). The remote environment has widened the gap between the powers of the mainstream and the minoritized. The increased sense of insecurity during remote schooling came from being further marginalized in curriculum design and implementation, daily communications, and academic supports.

Concerns about Language Development

Parents also made visible their concerns over children's language development, particularly young children's second language acquisition. Peiyu's concerns align with the co-constructed, relational, and contextual dimensions of language learning (Davila, 2020). In in-person classrooms, teachers are able to use a variety of teaching methods such as children's literature read aloud, hands-on activities, play-based learning, peer oral interactions, and so forth. All of these pieces were somewhat, if not completely, compromised during online schooling. Teachers were not able to pick up students' performance cues in order to intervene in a timely manner and provide individual support.

Immigrant parents are aware that academic English is identified as the power code that measures the potential for upward social mobility and good employment (Delpit, 1995). The limitations of effective interactions during online schooling discouraged immigrant students' opportunities to develop English language skills. Add in the lack of an equally adequate home language environment, which usually is only within their home and community settings practiced by a small number of people, and immigrant parents' concern over language development doubles.

Children's Well-being

Yang shared with me her family's daily routine during the school closure. Beside the designate time for the synchronous meetings with the teacher, Yang and her son spent most of their days hanging out inside the house or in the neighborhood park. The quality time between mother and son became part of their home learning and provided great comfort to both of them. All three participant parents stated that their priorities shifted. They adopted a new policy at home to focus more on their children's well-being rather than on their academic achievements. The importance of well-being for academic performance is explained by positive emotions that lead students to be more focused, attentive, and persistent (Suldo et al., 2011). When a sense of well-being is absent, students feel socially excluded because their identities and background are not acknowledged (Piller, 2012). Furthermore, the well-being of immigrant students contributes to a greater sense of belonging to the learning community, which helps them build relationships with their peers and teachers (Seltzer et al., 2016). The development of positive relationships leads to positive learning interactions, which eventually help improve students' academic achievement. Parents in this inquiry reported that they realized the importance of well-being and emotional stability for their immigrant children during remote learning and took initiatives to utilize their own cultural and linguistic knowledge and resources to support their young ones at home. Based on this new perspective on children's well-being, these three parents expanded learning beyond schoolwork, with all the resources they could access in the home context, such as family activities, shared reading, board games, and outdoor play. Parents also sought virtual social activities to support their children's well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic. They got creative in the face of safety concerns and party restrictions, as shown in the narratives of Yang and Lele. This creativity demonstrates the active implementation of strategies to nurture their children's overall well-being.

Support from Home Language and Community

Immigrant parents emphasized the important role of home language in their daily life. Home language is not only the main oral communication medium between parents and children in the home setting, but also serves as a valuable tool to translate, interpret, and explain children's schoolwork. Research also indicates that encouragement to speak all languages in one's linguistic repertoire, including the societally dominant language (i.e., English) and one's heritage language (Bamberg, 1997), makes it easier for one to communicate emotion. Promoting multilingualism in teaching and learning can help

improve students' overall well-being, which in turn leads to better academic performance. This performance could be explained by the close relationship between language and emotions (Van Der Wildt et al., 2017). These benefits from using the home language became more visible and important during remote schooling. Parents in the same immigrant community got together and created social opportunities for their children, utilizing their shared language and up-to-date technology. Lele's family saw a silver lining in the remote circumstances as people in the Kazak community reached out to each other online, forming a connection through their shared identity and language. Lele took this opportunity for her children to enrich their cultural learning and establish relationships. The three families' home language and community experiences send an invitation to educators and schools to consider complex factors besides subject matter in remote schooling.

Conclusion

In the opening story of this article, I recounted my experience as an immigrant parent supporting my kindergarten-aged daughter during remote schooling when schools closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. My own experience made visible to me how parents, and particularly immigrant parents, were asked to take on a large role of formal teaching at home, for which they were not properly prepared. Yang's, Peiyu's, and Lele's stories of their experiences walking alongside their young children in both home and community contexts amid the global pandemic showed multiple aspects of the challenges immigrant parents faced and the strengths they demonstrated. These are counter narratives that break the taken-for-granted view of immigrant parents as deficit-based and call for a new perspective on immigrant parents from educators. When common, deficit narratives about immigrant families and immigrant parents are interrupted by more complex information and knowledge, the reconstructing of teaching philosophy and pedagogy where immigrant parents' unique and very valuable knowledge is positioned equally alongside educators' knowledge becomes a possibility. In such a possibility, we bring teachers and parents together as partners and allow them to collaboratively educate young children through their own expertise and in different landscapes, thereby maximizing the educational benefits for young children.

Notes

1. García and Li (2014) established that translanguaging is the approach to consider the language practices of bilinguals as one linguistic repertoire with features that have been societally constructed as belonging to two separate languages.

2. Narrative inquirers negotiate with participants an ongoing relational inquiry space called "the field" and co-compose the field text.

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