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A small town immigrant success story

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A small town immigrant success story

by

Lisa S. Lahtela

A Thesis Submitted to the
Graduate Faculty in Partial Fulfillment of the
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Signatures have been redacted for privacy

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</th>
<th>iii</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. REFUGEES IN MIDDLE AMERICA: LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL CHALLENGES</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. THE VALUE OF ETHNOGRAPHY: GETTING INTO THE THICK OF STORY</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. PERA: “A PERSON MUST WORK”</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. ZDRAVKA: “GOOD AS BREAD”</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. SANJA: “BEND THE WOOD WHILE IT’S YOUNG”</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. DRAGANA: “LIKE A LITTLE WATER IN THE PALM OF YOUR HAND”</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. IMPLICATIONS: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX: SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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My husband, Pekka, also deserves my gratitude. His support gave me the encouragement to keep pressing to the end.
I. REFUGEES IN MIDDLE AMERICA: 
LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL CHALLENGES 

In June, 1991, when war broke out in the former Yugoslavia, no one knew the ultimate sacrifices the people would pay. Wars based on long-standing hatreds between ethnic groups are never resolved in a short time. This has been the case in the former Yugoslavia. Once a country of over 21 million people, Yugoslavia was rich in diversity, both in the beauty of the country, and also in its many ethnic groups (Baedeker, 1986). But now, only two republics remain in Yugoslavia, Serbia and Montenegro, the others having separated themselves and become independent. Thousands of people have been killed and even more wounded. Refugees have fled the country, settling in different parts of the world, including the United States. In Iowa alone, nearly 500 refugees from Eastern Europe settled here by the fall of 1993, some of these from the republics of the former Yugoslavia (Bureau of Refugee Services Annual Report, 1993, p. 24). Of those from the former Yugoslavia, most, 113, are Bosnian (p. 22).

War refugees are not new to the United States. Vietnamese, Laotian, and Cambodian refugees have been coming here since the 1970's and have become a familiar part of our culture, especially in urban areas. But most Americans
probably are unaware of the hardships they and other refugees, like today's former Yugoslavs, endure when they are forced to leave their homes and countries and start life in a new culture.

In 1991 and 1992, over 2,000,000 immigrants entered the United States (INS Fact Book, 1993, p. 12), almost 500,000 of whom were refugees (p. 10). Most immigrants intended to reside in California, New York, Texas, Florida, New Jersey, and Illinois (p. 15). Of the cities where they settled, San Diego was first, and within the top twenty, the largest cities of New York, Miami, and Los Angeles were all of high priority (p. 11). Why? All of these communities have traditionally had large immigrant populations, and people naturally tend to seek out the assistance of their own people when learning to acculturate to a different society (Finnan, 1987; Gibson, 1987).

Iowa is not a state that usually attracts large numbers of immigrants, especially refugees. But in Iowa, over 100,000 people aged 5 and older do not speak English in the home; this is a 9% increase since 1980 (Green, 1993, p. 2A). Based on Bureau of Refugee Services statistical data through September 30, 1993, approximately 13,350 refugees lived in Iowa (Bureau of Refugee Services: Annual Report, 1993, p. 24).
Between the fall of 1992 and 1993, 824 new immigrants settled in Iowa. Most were Southeast Asians, but, as previously stated, over one hundred were from Bosnia. Since the resettlement of these Bosnian refugees began in February, 1993, this figure is misleading (p. 22).

Yugoslavia and Yugoslavs

The civil war in Yugoslavia is confusing to many Americans. Even the United Nations is unsure of how to bring an end to the conflict. Rebecca West in her two volume work on the Yugoslavia of World War II, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*, describes Slavs as "quarrelsome, courageous, artistic, intellectual, and profoundly perplexing to all other peoples" (West, 1969, p. 4). In my experience in the former Yugoslavia, I would add "proud" and "nationalistic" to that list. Jill Irvine, in her *The Croat Question*, has this to say about nationalism amongst the ethnic groups when the Communist government was formed in the former Yugoslavia:

Nationalism posed two major problems for the state-building aims of Communists: first, how to win the support of national movements when Communists opposed their political aspirations for greater political autonomy or separate nation-states; and secondly, once in power, how to reconcile the political demands of national movements with a Communist state-building strategy of rapid centralization. In a multinational state, Communists were forced to reconcile the decentralizing demands of national groups with the centralizing thrust of their state-building activities. (Irvine 1993, p. 12)
Nationalism is a big problem in the Balkans, and always has been.

There has been conflict amongst the nationalities for centuries, as West confirms:

'In your lifetime, have you known peace?'... I would never hear the word 'Yes,' if I carried my questioning of the dead back for a thousand years. I would always hear, 'No, there was fear, there were our enemies without, our rulers within, there was prison, there was torture, there was violent death'. (West, 1969, pp. 54-55)

With the death of Josip Broz, "Tito", the former political head of the Communist party, in 1980, the Communist government began to fall apart, and each ethnic group began to demand its rights. Nationalistic fervor took over and war broke out. And so the fighting continues, leaving many dead, wounded, and displaced. Some of the displaced make their way to America to begin life over again.

The Focus of This Study

Much is known about the immigrant who arrives in the larger cities of America, like New York, Chicago, or Los Angeles. Immigrants who settle in these cities often are able to find help in ethnically similar communities for adjusting to life in America (Finnan, 1987, p. 326). Larger cities, also, are set up with organizations, like Iowa's Bureau of Refugee Services located in the capital of Des Moines, whose sole purposes are to help new immigrants get settled. They
provide information and services to guide these new residents in adjusting to their new country.

Less is known about immigrants who settle in smaller towns. How does their knowledge of English affect how they get needed information for living in their new culture? What do they do when their resources are limited, and how do they cope with those limitations?

This study is designed to examine the challenges facing immigrants to smaller cities and rural areas in the U.S., where members of their ethnic group may be few or even non-existent. The specific focus here is a family from the former Yugoslavia who settled in a small town in Iowa, hereafter called Sunville. The family is a success story. Arriving in the States, literally with only the clothes on their backs, this family has had many adjustments to make. They now run a successful business in a small city about 35 miles from their home, hereafter called Mesa City, and seem to have acculturated to life in their new country.

I have attempted to examine the path this family took in adjusting to life in the United States. How did their expectations of life in America affect their acculturation? In what ways did their knowledge of English help them or hinder them in their journey? What social structures served as supports?
Qualifications

These questions interested me because of my own experience in adjusting to Yugoslav culture in the late 1980's and early 1990's. In 1983, I completed a B.S. in Dental Hygiene Public Health, and proceeded to work four years in the field, but I suffered burn-out in that career and decided to pursue a long-time desire to live overseas. I had been interested in living outside of the United States for several years to expand my understanding of the world, and had taken a month-long summer trip to several Eastern European countries in 1985. My specific interest in Yugoslavia developed from that trip. So, in September of 1987, I left the United States for Belgrade, Yugoslavia, and apart from a 10 day visit to Minneapolis in December, 1989, I did not return to the U.S. until October, 1991.

During my first 9 months in the country I lived with a Yugoslav family while studying the language and culture, which I knew virtually nothing about before going. When I moved from the family's home, I continued to concentrate on learning the language and culture through formal and informal language instruction and through developing relationships with Yugoslavs. During my final year in the country I worked as a translator, both privately and in a company setting, and as a
teacher for an English Language Institute. Working for Yugoslav firms and establishing friendships with Yugoslavs outside of work gave me an opportunity to live as close to Yugoslav culture as any foreigner could.

Though some of my friends were native-speakers of English, I chose to spend most of my time with Yugoslavs. Most of my relationships were with Serbs, but I also had Croatian friends from Zagreb, now the capital of the independent country of Croatia. I also traveled extensively in the former Yugoslavia.

My familiarity with the people, the language, and the culture of this area of the world gives me the background which is needed for someone to study the subject I am presenting. Since this study entails my observations and my recommendations, it also comes with my limitations. I have tried to remain neutral, to take a non-judgemental stance, in my data gathering, as I discuss in Chapter 2, but at the same time draw from my experience to aid me in making appropriate analyses of what I have found.

When I returned to the States, and settled in Mesa City, I realized I had a need to continue to establish relationships with people from the former Yugoslavia. It had been a life-changing experience, and I did not want to lose that part of my life nor the lessons I learned. I also did not want to
lose my ability to communicate in Serbocroatian, so I actively pursued meeting people from the former Yugoslavia. I met the family in this study through “word of mouth,” and also as a result of reading an article in the local newspaper about the business they run.

**Family Profile**

While many of Yugoslavia's refugees (including those who are settling in Iowa) are from Bosnia, this family is from Eastern Croatia, called Slavonia, the area in the former Yugoslavia where the civil war actually began. It is in this part of the country that the town of Vukovar is located, where thousands of people died in November of 1991, including one of my own Croatian friends and his mother. The family members in this study lived most of their lives in villages and towns in this area, places similar in population size to Sunville (550 people) and Mesa City (24,000 people).

The family consists of a widowed woman, Dragana, in her 60's, her middle-aged son, Pera, her daughter-in-law, Zdravka, and her teenage granddaughter, Sanja (Figure 1.1). They have been in Iowa for over 2 1/2 years, having left war-torn Slavonia in December of 1991.

The oldest member of the family is Dragana, whose name means "dear one". Born in January of 1934 to Serbian parents
in a city in northern Serbia, she finished primary, secondary, and post-secondary vocational college before marrying and moving to another town in Serbia with her husband, also Serb. She had both of her children in this town, and when her oldest, Pera, was 10, the family moved to a small town in Slavonia. Until her move to the United States in 1991 with Pera, Zdravka, and Sanja, she remained in Slavonia, a period of 30 years. Dragana has been granted permanent residency by the United States government through her daughter's family, which established residency in the early 1980's. She now bakes bread for her son's bakery, spending 6 days a week in the family home in Sunville, making 10 different varieties of bread.

![Family Tree](image)

Figure 1.1 - Family Tree

Pera, "the rock", is the oldest of Dragana's two children, his sister, Ana, being the younger. He was born in a small town in Serbia in May of 1952, and moved to Slavonia at 10 years of age. Except for those first 10 years and his 6 years of university work in Serbia, Pera lived in Slavonia all
of his life. After finishing college, Pera returned to Eastern Croatia and worked as a veterinarian for a number of years. In 1991, he left his village after defending it for three months from Croatian nationalists, and settled in the United States, opening a bakery in Mesa City, Iowa. He is the head of his family, as has been the tradition in Yugoslavia which favors "a strong prevalence of patriarchal society... with a male household head..." (Halpern, Halpern, & Foley, 1977, p. 170). The U.S. government has just granted him, his wife and daughter refugee status from Croatia.

Zdravka, whose name means "healthy", was born in May of 1952 to Croatian parents and grew up in Slavonia. She met Pera when they were both studying at the university in Belgrade, in Serbia, and married him. Although she is not a Serb, ethnic sympathies were not as strong in the 1970's as they are today, so it was not a problem for a Serb and a Croat to marry. They settled in Eastern Croatia and had one daughter, Sanja. Until she came to Mesa City, Zdravka practiced dentistry in her town. Now, she helps Pera run the bakery, mostly buying food supplies and serving the lunch menu.

Sanja, the "dream" for the family's future, is the 17-year-old daughter of Pera and Zdravka. She was born in January of 1977 in Slavonia, and lived there until coming to
the States in 1991 at the age of 14, turning 15 one month after her arrival. Sanja plans to graduate from high school a semester early and begin university work in January, 1995. Except when she is in school, she helps out with the family business, mostly serving customers and packaging bread.

Pera and his family would rather be in their home in Slavonia than in the United States. They did not originally plan to leave their country permanently. The decision to stay was made in the States and was strongly supported by Ana and Goran, Pera's sister and brother-in-law who have lived in Mesa City for almost a decade.

Pera was so committed to his village, where Serbs and Croats had lived peacefully for years, that he took up arms against Croats and defended it for three months. Since the situation was so dangerous, though, he decided several times, for the safety of his family, to leave the country and try to "wait it out." They believed Serbs were being arrested and mistreated by Croats, so they were afraid to stay; "It wasn't a place to live" [trans.]. Pera and his family kept their visas to the United States current so that they could leave whenever they felt it was necessary. After a couple of visits to the States, it finally became "necessary" to stay in America.
Mesa City and Sunville

Traditional Slavic settlements in the early part of the 20th century were in Chicago, Detroit, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Buffalo, and New York City (Henzl, 1981, p. 295). Serbocroatian speakers, those from the former Yugoslavia, were most concentrated in the Chicago area (p. 300). Zdravka's grandmother lived in Milwaukee, and Zdravka also had other relatives in Chicago and Cleveland. She and her family visited these relatives in the 1980's, but when she left the turmoil in Yugoslavia, she and her family came to Iowa to be with Pera's sister.

The town where Pera, Zdravka, Sanja, and Dragana first established themselves in America was Mesa City, Iowa, where Pera's sister lives. The population of 24,000 of this university town doubles during the months of September through May when the students are present. Many of the town's permanent residents work for the university in some capacity. Several of the town's residents or members of the business community have developed relationships with Pera and Zdravka, assisting them in cultural adjustments and helping them establish their business.

Sunville, where the family now lives, is 35 miles north of Mesa City. Through the newspaper, the family learned of an inexpensive home for sale, so Goran bought the home for Pera
and Zdravka until they were financially able to take over the house payments, and the family moved in three months after their final departure from Yugoslavia.

Sunville is a small farming community of 550 people, mostly of Scandinavian heritage. There are three churches in town, Lutheran, Methodist, and Evangelical Free, and those involved in the latter have made attempts to help Pera and his family adjust to their new culture. Some friendships have also developed with neighbors, but because of the demands on their time with the business, Pera and Zdravka are not really a part of the community. They must work in Mesa City and also at home in Sunville after their business day is completed in Mesa City. This makes them unable to find time to socialize. Zdravka laughingly points this out:

'we have two family here in Sunville. Met them, we met them sometimes when we have time, when they have time. I think we were together, Christmas. It was August at the time she told me this.

The family would like to have more time away from work, but it is difficult at this point since the business is still young. With such limited contact with Americans in Sunville or Mesa City, it is difficult for family members to learn about the culture in which they live.
Affective Factors in Second Language Learning

Cultural adjustment is a common problem immigrants face, especially refugees, who often do not come by choice. They do not study about their new country beforehand, as Dragana emphasizes:

I didn't have a picture. My children came; they brought me gifts, things that we didn't have, that made me happy, that I enjoyed, but, picture? No. I didn't ever, I tell you, I never thought about America..., that I would come like I did. [trans.]

She didn't have any picture in her mind of America; it was never important to her. Now, she and the others study their new culture at the same time they try to function in it. And not only did they have very little understanding of the culture beforehand, but they also had a very limited ability to communicate in English.

Learning a new language is the key to unlocking the mystery of a culture, and for those refugees coming to the United States, learning English is crucial: "Language is the key that opens the door and allows us to look into the minds of others, to share what they have learned, and to feel what they have felt" (Chastain, 1988, p. 56). Language helps us to "become a fully participating member of society and culture" (p. 56).
There are many theories about how people acquire second languages, but one of the key issues that relates to most of these theories is the influence of affective factors. Patricia Richard-Amato states it most clearly:

We do know that factors or combinations of factors having to do with attitudes, motivation, and level of anxiety are central to the affective domain. These are strongly influenced by the process of acculturation and by certain personality variables. (Richard-Amato, 1988, p. 54)

What are these affective factors? Attitudes, including those toward self or the second language and the people who speak it, motivation, such as the purposes for which the learner wants to learn English, and level of anxiety, with lower anxiety correlating with a higher level of language acquisition, are all important. Acculturation is relevant because those who tend to acculturate to the second language group tend to also acquire the second language to a greater degree (p. 59).

Personality is the factor which seems significant in this family, especially concerning Pera. I show why this is important when telling Pera's tale, but it is important to note at this point that Richard-Amato suggests that those who tend to take risks, and are less inhibited, have a greater propensity to acquire the second language (p. 62). Beebe states that "the successful learner is not afraid of making an
error and not afraid of speaking when uncertain of the exact syntax" (Beebe, 1983, p. 47). Language is acquired not in the role of spectator, but through use (Bruner, 1990, p. 70). Others in the field of English as a Second Language (ESL) have also noted the significance of these affective factors (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991; Ellis, 1990; Finegan & Besnier, 1989; Chastain, 1988). Affective factors seem influential in this family, as well.

The Report

The story that follows profiles how one family, refugees from the former Yugoslavia, has used English to unlock some of the mysteries of American culture, and how that family has established a community of people willing to continue to help it integrate within its new country.

As an ethnographically approached case study of a single family, this focuses on a small "bounded community" (Agar, 1980, p. 29). This project is not designed to produce generalizable "results," but rather to provide a candid, "zoom lens shot" of the challenges facing one immigrant family in a small town in Middle America, a family relatively removed from large numbers of its own ethnic group. The intended audience are those who may feel a need to see faces behind immigration statistics and to gain a behind-the-scenes glimpse of the daily life, including the hurdles of linguistic and cultural
adjustment, one immigrant family faced. This close-up perspective may be especially useful to professionals and volunteers in ESL and refugee concerns who work with immigrants, especially those from the former Yugoslavia.

NOTES

1 My husband discovered while searching for employment as an elementary school teacher in Iowa that in the capital city of Des Moines, the school districts expect hundreds of more Bosnian refugees by fall, 1994.

2 Names have been changed to protect the privacy of the participants. This is explained in more detail in Chapter 2.

3 Chapter 2 further discusses the use of translation in the text.
II. THE VALUE OF ETHNOGRAPHY: GETTING INTO THE THICK OF THE STORY

I have chosen to use an ethnographic approach for this case study. So one should understand what is an ethnographic approach, and why it is relevant for this study. According to Donna Johnson, the purpose of ethnographic research is "to describe and interpret the cultural behavior, including communicative behavior, of a group" (Johnson, 1992, p. 134). An ethnographer "studies the cultural system of a group and provides a rich description and cultural interpretation of communicative and other behavior, attitudes, and values" (p. 134).

The questions I set out to find answers for lend themselves to ethnographic research methods. I investigate: 1) how the family's expectations of life in America affect their acculturation, 2) in what ways their knowledge of English helps them or hinders them in their journey, and 3) what social structures serve as supports. Since my research questions deal with this family's acculturation and how their acquisition of the English language plays a role in that, ethnographic research is an appropriate method.

Validity of Ethnographic Research

Credibility is an issue in qualitative data gathering. Agar suggests that one of the problems is unsophisticated methodology (Agar, 1980, p. 10). Ethnographers "usually find little to instruct them in the scarce methodological
discussions in ethnographic research reports" (p. 10). Van Maanen suggests that:

Minimally, I now think that method discussions of ethnography must explicitly consider (1) the assumed relationship between culture and behavior (the observed); (2) the experiences of the fieldworker (the observer); (3) the representational style selected to join the observer and the observed (the tale); and (4) the role of the reader engaged in the active reconstruction of the tale (the audience). (Van Maanen, 1988, p. xi)

Case study researchers, then, "make carefully planned observations in natural settings and use interview, qualitative analysis, and narrative reports" (Stake, 1988, p. 256). Ethnographers look for threads of data which show consistencies, with which they can make hypotheses about what is happening within the community they are studying. Their interpretations of what is happening are woven into what Van Maanen calls "the tale". The reader is able to see the validity of the research through the descriptions the observer details about the observed, which she has obtained through interviewing and observing. Anthropologists have always found this approach credible, and many researchers from other fields are now also giving credibility to this method of data gathering (Wolcott, 1990, p. 26).

**Participant Protection**

There is a concern with ethnographic data gathering methods, though. Ethical questions are sometimes raised when dealing with human participants, especially in qualitative
research. Protecting the identities of the participants in a study is crucial to protecting their rights as private citizens. Other researchers (Heath, 1983; Agar, 1980) have used this principle in their research, and it is an important one to follow.

I was very careful to protect the participants in this study and reviewed my research plans with the University Human Subjects Review Committee at Iowa State University. In addition, I gave pseudonyms to each person to protect his or her identity. In Slavic cultures, names have meaning, so in keeping with the Slavic background of this family, Yugoslav names are given to the participants as pseudonyms. Also, names and locations of other people and places in this study are given pseudonyms.

Field Techniques

In essence I have studied Yugoslavs and Yugoslav culture for over 7 years, and this family in particular for over two years. Fieldwork actually took place in the summer of 1994, but I first met this family in 1992. To some extent, I have been studying them for that long. But, when gathering data specifically for this project, I worked closely with them over a period of three months. Thus, the actual period of intense data collection was embedded in a much longer period of time.

During the intense period of data collection, whatever was on the agenda for the day, I tried to participate in so that I would be able to observe without bringing too much
attention to myself. I became good at forming cinnamon rolls, washing dishes, sitting through high school lectures in Chemistry, and even putting up siding on a house. This meant that my understanding of Serbocroatian became important, especially during this time.

Agar and Johnson both agree that it is crucial for an ethnographer to know the native language of the ethnic group being studied. Agar emphasizes that an ethnographer loses control if an interpreter is introduced into the situation, even though this is necessary most of the time (Agar, 1980, p. 101). Johnson looks specifically at ramifications for the ESL researcher:

> The language abilities of researchers are crucial in much L2 ethnographic research. The ethnographer must know the language of the group under study. (Heath, 1982 cited in Johnson, 1992, p. 144)

The reader of an ethnography must then:

> consider whether the researcher had the language abilities to communicate fully with participants, and then think about how researcher roles and skills may have affected both what was observed and how observations were interpreted. (p. 144)

Not only did I use Serbocroatian in Yugoslavia, but since returning, I have continued to use the language and retain my knowledge of the culture through establishing relationships with native speakers of Serbocroatian in Iowa. There has been no need for a translator to be involved in data gathering for this study, then, because of my knowledge of the native language of the participants.
Data Collection Procedures

**Participant Observer** This knowledge of Serbocroatian allowed me to participate with the family in a variety of activities. I chose not to be an outside observer in the fieldwork stages, but instead, to be an active participant-observer for the most part. According to Agar, this means:

... that you are directly involved in community life, observing and talking with people as you learn from them their view of reality. (Agar, 1980, p. 114)

I worked in the business and spent time with Sanja at school and with Dragana at home. Since we knew each other well, awkwardness and "unnatural" behavior was minimized by my carrying out my role as a friend.

**Interviewer** Another phase of data collection that was important was the use of formal interviews. Agar says that "observation and interview mutually interact with each other" (p. 109). He goes on to support the role of interviewing by suggesting that it is the major way of understanding observation: ask participants what something means (p. 111).

My data collection procedure began with two formal interviews (see Appendix for sample interview questions) covering: 1) background information on the individual's personal life history and perceptions of America before coming to the United States, and changes in perceptions of America after arrival, and 2) English language proficiency before arrival, and current use of English. I chose to ask questions
focusing on these issues because they were the most relevant to answering my research questions and were not guaranteed to arise in casual conversations.

These interviews were then tested against actual observation (Agar, 1980, p. 90). I followed, or "shadowed", each participant for a full day, making informal observations of his or her activities or communication patterns:

Conversation analysis studies the organization of everyday talk, of language as actually used in social interaction. (Moerman, 1988, p. x)

Since I had often observed the family for long periods of time over the two-year period from 1992 to 1994, I knew what type of schedule each person held, so I chose observation days that would provide several different activities bringing her or him into contact with a variety of people. The final step was to hold a formal follow-up interview to the "shadow" day. This encompassed asking questions about what I had observed during the day, related to my research questions, which needed further clarification.

**Contact Interviews** Once I had completed gathering data from the family members themselves, I interviewed significant people in the participants' lives. In these final interviews, I looked at perceptions native speakers of English had of how well each participant had adjusted to being in the States, and how well he or she was able to communicate in English. The additional interview sessions with outside
informants were necessary to "triangulate the data" (Wolcott, 1990, p. 27). Stake notes that:

One of the primary ways of increasing validity is by triangulation... The technique is one of trying to arrive at the same meaning by at least three independent approaches. (Stake, 1988, p. 263)

Data was triangulated in these three ways: 1) through the participants themselves, 2) through outside contact people, and 3) through my own observations.

I audiotaped interviews and wrote supplementary notes concerning such matters as nonverbal expressions, interaction between people, and comments concerning the setting. I chose not to videotape sessions, believing this might be obtrusive and interfere with my role as participant-observer.

Data Analysis

Once the interviews were audiotaped, the painstaking task of transcribing the material began. In nearly half of the sessions we communicated in Serbocroatian, and those transcriptions were first written out in that language. Following this, they were then translated into English. Some nuances of language were lost in doing this, but there was still value in gathering the data in both languages, not only the second language (Zolbrod, 1981, p. 497). The participants were less inhibited when speaking in their native tongue.

To avoid observer bias, I have let participants and outside informants speak for themselves in the description. There is a preference for letting participants tell their own
stories in their own words in ethnographies (Wolcott, 1990, p. 19). This allows the reader to make her own conclusions. In the case where a translated quote is used, I have indicated this. Unless so indicated, quotes will appear in English as spoken by the participant.

Content Analysis

After transcribing the data, I looked for patterns and attempted to interpret my findings. Each stage is crucial, but one of the most important aspects of the qualitative analysis stage is "the search for patterns" (Stake, 1988, p. 259). Building theories from the data and looking for patterns across events is crucial (Agar, 1980, p. 115). The data gathered allowed me to analyze what I had found and then try to make some hypotheses based on patterns apparent in it. While it is difficult when looking at data to know what to include when telling the story, Wolcott notes that it is critical to get rid of much of the data collected (Wolcott, 1990, p. 35). I have hundreds of pages of notes, tape transcripts, and other materials collected from this research. Everything seems significant because everything relates to the participants' stories. Following ethnographic guidelines, though, means that I need to look for patterns, and so I have "majored on the majors" and not included everything.

Interpretive Stance

I chose to write using a non-judgemental stance. The problem in taking this position in that it is difficult to
make critical or controversial statements about the participants. I admit that this could be a weakness in the study, but what I did try to do was give participants "the benefit of the doubt." I was concerned about letting my own bias interfere in what I saw. For example, my views on the conflict in Yugoslavia differ to some extent from the family members, and because it is a complicated situation, I hesitate in challenging political views they may hold. What they experienced is true for them, so I let their voices be heard. This is their story, not mine.

It is important to point out what they have accomplished. I know from first-hand experience the "ups and downs" of adjusting culturally and linguistically to a new country. Although I do mainly take a positive view of this family's adjustment, I also point out their struggles with leaving a war-torn homeland, adjusting culturally to a new country, and learning a second language. These are no small accomplishments. To balance my views of their success, though, I let them speak for themselves on their own feelings of personal success.

I also needed to balance the friend/researcher relationship. In many ways it is difficult to write objectively when a friendship is involved. One does not want to "step on any toes." Before I began my research, though, I explained to each participant that I would have to write what I saw, that they might not like everything, but that was the
responsibility of a researcher. They were in agreement with this, so they did not expect that only positive comments would be made. In my experience with Yugoslavs, it is much easier to be direct and honest when presenting a point. This would not be an acceptable approach in many Asian cultures where "saving one's face" is an integral part of the culture.

Yugoslav acceptance of directness gives freedom to address participant struggles in this research. Pointing out success and struggles in this story by using participants' own words gives value to ethnographic research, even if there are issues the researcher must balance in the friend/researcher relationship.

This is how I see "the tale". It is time to move on and allow Pera, Zdravka, Sanja, and Dragana tell their own individual stories, what happened to them. When they have finished, we will look back on what they have said and try to make sense of their stories, try to see their successes and struggles. By doing this, we may be able to understand a little better what it might be like for others in their situation, new immigrants starting life over in an unfamiliar country.
III. PERA:
"A PERSON MUST WORK"

I met Pera in the fall of 1992, 10 months after his permanent entrance into the United States. A new European bakery had opened up in Mesa City where I lived, and I soon learned that it was owned and operated by a family from Yugoslavia. One evening I went in and introduced myself in Serbocroatian to Pera, who was running the front counter. A huge smile lit up his face, and he immediately asked, "Odakle ste vi?" ("Where are you from?"). From that moment on, for Pera I became a "Srpinja," a Serbian woman.

This was the beginning of my relationship with Pera and his family, and over the past two years I have watched them adjust to a new culture, and learn a new language. This is Pera's story.

The Escape

Leaving Yugoslavia permanently was never Pera's intention, because he was committed to his country and his people. But his family was more important to him, so he believed that being killed in the fighting, of which he was a participant, would not help them. Since he was in active combat, and men next to him in the fields surrounding his village were being killed every day, death was a very real possibility; "You learn from your experience [trans.]." His
experience in the fields during fighting taught him that he needed to leave.

He was more fortunate than most Yugoslavs because he was not hindered financially from travelling. His wife worked in a lucrative profession, dentistry, and, as a veterinarian, he also had a good salary. Living under a socialized form of government which paid for such things as health care and university expenses, also made it possible for them to save a large portion of what they earned. This made travel possible. Several times, he took his wife, Zdravka, daughter Sanja, and mother, Dragana, with him to the States, hoping the situation would calm down and they could return to live peacefully in their homes. This was not to be, as he finally realized during his final visit. The situation would not improve, so he and his family stayed here.

Starting Over

He was 39 years old, and all that he had were the clothes on his back. When he and Zdravka decided to come to the States this last time, it was becoming more difficult for men in the country to travel beyond the domestic borders. They were to be available to the Yugoslav army if the army needed soldiers. There were only two cities in the country where outside travel was permissible for men, so Zdravka and Pera decided that Pera would leave through one of those cities.
He took Zdravka, Sanja, and Dragana to the home of Dragana's sister in the Republic of Serbia, left them there, and travelled on to the former Republic of Macedonia, where one of the cities was located. In order not to draw attention to himself, he carried no luggage, making it appear that he was only leaving on a short business trip. He boarded a plane for Switzerland and, upon landing in Zurich, took a flight to Chicago where he passed through customs and then flew on to Iowa to stay with his sister, her husband, and their son. Once he arrived at his sister's home, he called his family, and they arranged to follow him to America after a couple of days.

**Veza**

Starting over in a new culture with a new language would not be easy. He needed "veza", a very important Serbocroatian word meaning "connections", to help him survive. I remember hearing that word almost every day during my four years in Yugoslavia. "It's not what you know, it's who you know," as Americans would say, could also be said about how things were run in the former Yugoslavia. I knew two very good architecture students who, because they had no personal connections who were architects, knew they probably would not be employed in the field. Today, they work in The Netherlands.
Pera, who knew that in Yugoslavia nothing could be accomplished without connections, also believed he would need to establish "veza" in Mesa City. He already had his first links in Goran and Ana, and through their help he created a larger community of people, both Serb and American, who helped him work within his new culture (Figure 3.1).

Each of these communities plays a special role in his life; each has a purpose. His Serb community understands the world where he grew up; it understands his language. He would like to be with Serbs more than he is: "Probably if there were a larger community, most likely we would spend more time with them [trans.]." One of his main limitations in spending time with other Serbs is the fact that his Serb community is very small.

The American community plays a different role. It forces him to press forward in living life in his new culture, and especially in using his new language, on a daily basis:

I need to learn it... Now, we are in, surrounded in that. That language is exactly that, native language. And you are the person who learning that language, who are not good in that language... In the case, you know, that is sometimes a disadvantage when we're here. It's not that enjoyment, like necessity.

Learning English is not necessarily enjoyable to Pera, but it is essential. He needs to learn it in order to live as he would like to live in America.
One of the reasons he is successful in business and has adjusted well to life in the States through his American "veza" is that he realizes he makes language errors, and so he aggressively deals with communication breakdown when it occurs within that American community:

Explanation, writing, drawing, going around. That, that, that's all the time, "Okay, wait a second, let's go again. What's that, another word for that, synonym for that or something." If you don't understand, you ask.

He keeps asking until he understands.

![Diagram of Community Veza]

**Figure 3.1 - Community Veza**

**English Background**

Pera took English as a course in junior high and high school thirty years ago, but outside of those 2 hours and 15 minutes per week, he had no real opportunities to practice language in context. Everyone around him spoke Serbocroatian. When he was older, though, he would try to practice English
with other non-native speakers while vacationing in different parts of Europe, including Yugoslavia:

Practicing with foreigners... I all the times was convinced that my English is pretty good. Whenever we go out of the country, I try to use English, without any success, of course, because English was too bad.

Although he had a positive view, at the start, of his language skills, he did realize that his proficiency was limited. He wasn't perfect. Since coming to Iowa, he has improved his English, mainly by talking to those who have helped him in running his business, and to customers in his shop. He has not had further formal language instruction.

**Career Change**

His English proficiency was limited when he arrived in Mesa City, but that was not the only problem he faced. Although he had worked for many years as a veterinarian in small towns in the former Yugoslavia, his license was not valid in the States. It is not unusual for new immigrants to have to change their occupations, but this was hard for Pera, and still is (Finnan, 1987, p. 318). He felt that this was unfair; "And that isn't okay. You know that isn't okay - that you can't work in your own field. That isn't okay." Now he had to try something completely unfamiliar, something he did not feel qualified to do.
So how has he managed to run his bakery so well? For most Americans, setting up a business is a complicated process. Many fail after a few months and lose a great deal of money in the process. Bill, who worked with The Small Business Development Center when Pera began his business, helped Pera establish his bakery. "Nationally," he says, "65-70% of small businesses close intentionally during the first year for a variety of reasons, but the actual failure rate for restaurants is 65-70%." He goes on to say that in Iowa, the rate of survival for small businesses is higher than the national average with only about a 30% failure rate. These are much better odds, but when a business is owned by a non-native speaker of English, failure rate could be much higher since there are cultural and linguistic struggles which may make failure more of a possibility. Pera has succeeded, though, and he has done it in his second language. What is his secret? His "veza" makes it possible.

The Ethnic Community

In 1992, California, New York, and Florida were in the top 4 states of intended residence for immigrants, accommodating over 55% of the total number of immigrants (INS Fact Book, 1993, p. 15). Most new arrivals to America's shores settled in larger cities in these states: New York, Los Angeles, Miami, to name a few (p. 11). These immigrants
connected with ethnic communities of their own people and within those communities found others willing to help them get settled (Finnan, 1987, p. 314).

In a similar way, it appears that Pera has managed to do that, though he lives in a small town in Iowa where few Serbs live. Although resources, such as ESL programs or government offices available to answer questions for new immigrants, are rare in small town settings, Pera has managed to find support for building his bakery business and helping himself and his family acculturate to life in Iowa.

Support for Pera initially came from the family, especially his sister, Ana, and his brother-in-law, Goran, a university professor (Figure 3.2). Ana and Goran had been in Mesa City for almost ten years and were able to be a connection for him because they had already experienced life in the United States. They had worked with the language and had discovered how to function in American society as a family, since they also have one child, Dragan, as Pera and Zdravka have. Pera's wife, Zdravka, said:

Goran helps a lot. You know, Pera consults with him if he needs something... We consult with them in everything. We work together... When we looked for this new place, they helped us, and we decided together. If Goran hadn't been here, I don't know how we would have decided.

[trans.]
So, Pera began with a community of two, Ana and Goran, members of his own family.

Goran helped Pera decide to stay in America by pointing out the reality of what was happening in the former Yugoslavia. There was a bloody civil war which had no hope of an early resolution. Because Pera's English was poor, it was Goran who contacted the Immigration and Naturalization Service and helped Pera complete the necessary forms. Goran convinced Pera that opening a restaurant was a good idea and then backed him financially in the endeavor. In fact, Goran owned Pera and Zdravka's first bakery and their home. Since they had no credit established, he took the financial risks for them. To this day, whenever a decision needs to be made concerning the business or family needs, Goran and Ana are the first to be consulted.

It may appear that Goran gives and does not receive anything in return for his help since he is always further along than Pera in dealing with the language and culture, but this is not entirely true. Pera does not take Goran's investment lightly but works extremely hard to make the business a success. As he says, he also expects the rest of the family to do so:

[I] must lead; now count on [the others], every one of us is an adult. You know, that's how I think. You must count on Sanja, on mother, on us. I think
you really must now. That, that, that is big, that is a big problem.

[trans.]

In other words, he believes that all members of the family must pull together to make their new life successful, his daughter and his mother included. It's "a big problem" because he knows this is hard for them, but he believes it is necessary. Everyone in the family works from early morning until late in the evening. There is virtually no leisure time any day of the week. Pera expects this from himself as well as from the others.

Pera
  /
 /\  
/   \ 
Ana Zdravka
Goran Sanja
Dragan Dragana

Figure 3.2 - Family Veza

This hard work has prevented the business from failing, and Goran and Ana have not lost anything which they invested. This type of support is typical for a Yugoslav family. In my experience in Serbia, I often heard of how "veza" usually came through the family first, especially when someone was looking for work. This was why the architecture students did not believe they could find work in their field; they did not have any relatives to call on for help. Family helps family.
There are other Yugoslavs in Mesa City. Since it is a university town, some are students who live there temporarily; a few others are first generation Americans (Figure 3.3). Both groups speak English as well as Serbocroatian. Pera is now a contributing member of this community in that he helped a Yugoslav friend relocate to Minneapolis when the man lost his job in Iowa unexpectedly. There is give and take. Having "veza" is important in both the Yugoslav and American communities; knowing the right person often helps us to get things done.

Pera

Nenad - Kathy Aleks Lisa Marko - Vesna Others (moved)

Minimal Contact: Orthodox Church in neighboring state, and other Serbs in Iowa

Figure 3.3 - Serb Veza

I would also include myself in this part of Pera's network because he considers me to be part of it. A year ago, I helped him when a discrimination complaint was filed against him by a black international student. This student, who was a customer, accused Pera of discrimination when Pera asked if he
had done some damage to part of the bakery. Pera had witnesses who informed him that the student had been seen in that section of the bakery moments before the problem occurred.

Pera was exonerated of any wrong-doing, but during the process was very nervous and completely out of his element because he could not talk his way out of the situation with the student at the time of the occurrence and had to work through the legal system, which was new to him. I was his "veza", his resource person. He needed to write a letter, stating his perception of what had occurred. He wrote it in Serbian, and I translated it. When a committee of people came to investigate the situation, Pera called upon me to sit in as a translator in case he misunderstood something. He did not want to jeopardize himself or the business if a breakdown in communication occurred with the committee.

The Business Community

Pera has managed to connect with support systems within the business community (Figure 3.4) itself; "You read the contract, and understand the contract or find somebody who understand it." Just recently, he mentioned he had received a contract for a new credit card. Overwhelmed by the pages of small print, he brought it to the bank and asked someone there to read it for him, informing him of whether it was anything
he should consider. This is one way he gets around language problems: "find somebody who understand it."

Pera attended one of Bill's two hour evening classes which covered principles on setting up a business. Afterward, Bill counseled Pera in several one-on-one sessions about what he needed in particular for his business. What started out as only a professional relationship, though, soon turned into a friendship, and Bill began to offer his services on his own time. Not only this, but at no time has Pera ever had to pay for any business counseling: "I would like to offer him some food as a thank you, but I'm not sure how he would react, so Zdravka and I invite him and his wife to dinner sometimes" [trans.]. Bill is an important part of Pera's "veza", so Pera does find ways of thanking him.

Bill works through problems for Pera if he feels that Pera would be too challenged linguistically. He observes that Pera has experienced problems in the past when dealing with a difficult issue. One time, in particular, Pera miscommunicated over the phone with an agency out of state concerning information he needed about paying taxes, so Bill:

... realized in those situations it might be better if I would step in and try to explain to him what I had done, and - kind of sort of bring him in through the back door with it, and try to get him the terminology, but get it to him in a more relaxed manner.
Bill remains Pera's primary resource person for problems concerning taxes, contracts, zoning questions, bank issues, and other business related functions. For anything to do with setting up and running a small business, Bill is Pera's connection with the business community.

Figure 3.4 - English-Speaking Business Veza

Telling His Story

The reason Bill has offered his services in this way is because of his friendship with Pera. He told me that what draws him to Pera is the story that Pera brings with him from Yugoslavia. His need to communicate his personal tragedy as a refugee engages many people and has helped him to establish relationships with others, including his customers, as they are drawn into his life. Pera's desire to tell his story has also motivated him in learning English. He tells everyone who will listen. Some listen with compassion, as Bill did, and desire to help him, to make life a little easier for him. But
sometimes that need backfires and people do not want to hear his story. Sometimes they just are not interested, and sometimes they strongly disagree with him because of his anti-Croatian views. Even though his experience was very real, some people believe that he is unable to view a larger picture and see the faults of his own people. This may end up costing him customers, but Bill has noticed that often that seems to be okay with Pera. As Bill explains: "... to [Pera] it was more important to state his opinion than to have that additional money in his pocket." Just as many survivors of the Holocaust feel the need to bear witness so that the world might "never forget", so Pera must bear witness to what he sees as the truth, so that there will never again be another war like the one in the Yugoslavia.

Pera is satisfied with his level of English because he is able to talk about the war and the factors that have influenced it, like Yugoslav politics:

And what I've learned over two years is good enough... When I talk about politics, about every other thing that we talk... We just talk about many different things and agree about most things, but it's a long conversation.

Because Pera is able to communicate what he feels is important, he is not highly motivated to strive for a higher level of proficiency. Though he would like to improve, he is not unhappy with his current level:
Because it's, cannot improve the language more than what I've improved. Now, I think that it's conversation is the best way to learn the language... And I'm totally aware that I'm not never speak correct English, and I don't care very much. Years ago, I probably be very disappointed if somebody told me that I don't... Accent will stay, pronunciation will stay. There's nothing you can do about that. And for me, it's most important to understand what people are talking.

Nor is he bothered by people pointing out his language errors:

That's human. We have now, we have some still there that is preserved errors, but we know that they're errors, but we try to see what will be people's reaction to that, if people see that error or not... Because you still learn. We probably will never have that without any errors.

Pera has become reconciled to the fact that he will always be learning and will make errors. What he tries to do is address those errors when they cause communication breakdown. And, sometimes, if he feels he is not ready to handle a situation on his own, he will "find somebody who understand it," and allow his community to work for him.

**Strategies**

Pera admits that he still has language problems and, at times, faces breakdowns in communication with native speakers of English, like those he finds in his business community. He is a Serb, bold, confident, and outspoken, and this helps him aggressively pursue restoration of communication (West, 1969, p. 4). In the 1980's while living in Belgrade, I used to find myself sitting and talking with Serbs about their
misconceptions of America. One of these was that everyone in the U.S. was rich. Often, with no personal experience concerning the States, they would argue that they were right and I was wrong. They were very direct and would tell you what they thought. This type of personality, one which demonstrates assertiveness, may do better when adjusting to a new culture than other, more reserved personalities (Richard-Amato, 1988, p. 62).

Pera is very confident and not afraid to look for any possible way to accomplish his goals, whether it be through his community networks if he feels he needs outside help, or through his own perseverance. This is no different when it comes to complications with the language:

Explanations, writing, drawing, going around. That, that, that's all the time, "Okay, wait a second, let's go again. What's that, another word for that, synonym for that", and after that, "Uh huh." If you don't understand, you ask... You have some people, they say, "Never mind"... and I sometimes, sometimes I insist...

Bill confirms that Pera often asks for clarification; "I would say it's fifty/fifty between a puzzled look and him stopping me and saying 'What does that word mean?'" He needs clarification and is not afraid to ask for it. This seems advantageous to him in his acquisition of English.
Pera's perceptions of America also motivate him in learning language. As Richard-Amato notes, a positive view of the second language culture is beneficial in language acquisition (Richard-Amato, 1988, p. 59). Pera has a very positive view of America and, for the most part, always has had, even before he decided to remain here. He describes his first visit to the States as:

You know, everyone, everyone, everyone smiled, everyone smiled at us, big stores... People were, you know, they appeared more honest than with us. To us they were laughing, free, always fine.

This positive attitude toward America is reflected in Pera's thoughts about the ease of going into business. Becoming a small business owner was facilitated in part because people, like Bill and Goran, were willing to take over the more complicated language tasks, but according to Pera, the government itself made life easier:

Goran said that here the administration does its job... Give them information, give them what they want from you... Fill it in correctly... They won't come here and say, "Listen, you must have this, you must have that, and you can't." He says, "You must have what is found in the law, to what is necessary according to the law." And if you have, there is no more reason to talk. You know, there isn't anything like he must like me personally.

[trans.]
This was very different from Yugoslavia, where, as the saying goes: "There's the law, and there's what people do." An American businessman I knew in Yugoslavia was told by the police that if he followed the law, he would not be able to set up his business. Pera has been pleasantly surprised by how much the law is regulated here in comparison to his experience in the former Yugoslavia. His positive view of American law is one factor that has helped him to think positively about his second language culture, but his relationships with people have really influenced him the most.

"Success"

His personality traits, boldness, confidence, and outspoken ways, his positive view of American culture, and his establishment of "veza" have all helped Pera assimilate into American life. From an American point of view, he is a success story because he is motivated to learn the language and use other people as resources to help him to continue to move forward and assimilate to life in America. He knows that he must work to adjust in his new culture through these means or he will not survive. Pera has kept his family together, and off public assistance by sheer will and hard work.

From a Serb point of view, though, he has not attained success. When I asked him if he believed he was a success I anticipated an affirmative response. What I got from him was:
I don’t think I’m successful here because my business is still in the beginning stages, and Sanja is still developing. Real success depends on the next generation. I’m still waiting on Sanja. [trans.]

In other words, his own success as a person depends on what path his daughter will take. If she does well, then that will be a reflection on him. This means that by investing in her education, he will provide for her personal success as well as his own. This is not unlike what Finnan discovered when studying Vietnamese refugees: “many refugees had children, and they felt that it was more appropriate for them to take a job and let their children train for careers” (Finnan, 1987, p. 318). She goes on to say, “Vietnamese parents care for their children out of love, responsibility and a feeling that their children are their future” (p. 319). For Pera, success is still ahead in the future with his daughter.
IV. ZDRAVKA: "GOOD AS BREAD"

On that fall evening when I first met Pera and Zdravka, only Pera was at the counter serving customers. Zdravka was in her usual place behind the scenes, in the kitchen. She was and is "dobar kao hleb", "good as bread", or "good as gold" as Americans would say. While Pera was "the up-front man," Zdravka was the quiet servant in the kitchen, whipping up great concoctions to delight the senses of customers. It was her cooking that kept the regulars coming back.

While Pera is outspoken, Zdravka is quiet. Pera says:

I love to talk. I don't think I'm better than her in English. The only difference is I like to talk, and Zdravka doesn't. She doesn't even talk in Serbian.

[trans.] Her story is different from her husband's. She is not a verbal person, so it takes time to understand what she has experienced in coming to America. My attempt here is to show what her seemingly silent journey has been like.

Leaving Home

Zdravka was born in Eastern Croatia and lived most of her life in small towns in that area of the former Yugoslavia. She is a Croat. It is her homeland that is under fire, her villages and towns. Eastern Croatia, Slavonia, borders Serbia, so many of the villages are ethnically mixed. Some have a majority of Croats, and some, a majority of Serbs. It
is an area that would naturally see strife in a civil war because of its ethnic diversity.

Zdravka grew up around Serbs, so it was natural that she had Serbian friends as well as Croatian friends. She did not hesitate in deciding to go to a university in Serbia, where she studied dentistry; other Croats were there. At that university, she fell in love with a Serb, Pera. When they finished their studies, they moved back to Slavonia and settled down to live, work, and raise a family.

Life was calm, but that changed slowly over time as unrest developed in the country after Tito's death. There seemed to be no real order in the government, and the separate republics began to demand their rights. This was especially true when I was in the country in the late 1980's and early 1990's. Every day in the newspaper there were articles about ethnic tensions. Then the fighting began, and their lives changed forever.

Because Zdravka and Pera had family in the States, she had been to America several times for brief periods to visit relatives. When tension mounted at home, she, Pera, Sanja, and Pera's mother, Dragana, went to the States to rest and wait out the situation. It never really completely eased, but they chose not to stay in America the first few times. When the war actually began and Pera went to fight, it became too
much for Zdravka and the rest of the family. They decided to go to America again and wait out the situation one more time. Zdravka described how they left:

We needed to buy tickets, and I didn't want to leave without him... I packed, but I insisted that we all go together or we don't go. And then we went for his passport, and he couldn't leave legally... from Belgrade... He went via... Macedonia... He was the first to have a ticket, abnormally expensive ticket, much more than what we had... He called us, and left for America... We left for America from Belgrade.

[trans.]

It was a very stressful time. Even though it appeared that the situation was very bad in their country, when they left they still did not entertain the thought of not going back.

Starting Over

When Zdravka arrived in the States, she had left everything behind that she could not fit into four suitcases:

Everything that we brought from Yugoslavia... us, Sanja and I, four suitcases, Pera's mom, two suitcases. Pera came with nothing.

[trans.]

She had no home of her own; she no job, no income, no savings:

I had hope for 10 years. I worked and saved money in a bank account, 10, 13 years work experience... I have nothing to show for that work. They won't. Who knows if they'll ever recognize that work experience. The money is gone.

[trans.]

Because of the war, there was no money, so her bank account was frozen. She had nothing to show for all of her years of
work. All that she had was left behind, except that which she could carry with her.

**Family First**

She did not come to America alone but with her family. For her, this was and still is the most important part of her community (Figure 4.1). She has had people who could help her make decisions and who could take care of her initially. She was not isolated from others who could understand her situation.

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Zdravka
/\  \\
/  \  \\
Ana  Pera
Goran  Sanja
Dragan  Dragana
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Figure 4.1 - Family Veza

These are still the people she spends time with the most. Ana sees her every day as she helps with the business, and Goran sees her several times a week. They are more than just family; they are friends.

Zdravka is the immediate family's caretaker, so she naturally spends much of her time with her daughter and her mother-in-law. In a recent conversation I had with Pera and Zdravka about family changes and the role Zdravka now has in the family, the conversation went something like this:
Lisa: What are your responsibilities in the family?

Pera: She takes care of our daughter.

Zdravka: [laughing] I look after my husband... We can't decide by ourselves what we do. There is Pera's mother. We must look after her... You must see what are her wishes, and you can't do, to decide alone as we decided there.

[trans.]

In Slavonia, Pera, Zdravka, and Sanja lived together, and Pera's mother lived in her own home not far away, but now she lives with them. She cannot be ignored.

Pera mentioned that there had been additional stresses put on the family by having three generations under one roof: "That's a problem. We lived alone, us three..." [trans.]. Every family member realizes these stresses, but there is a sense of each of them working together to make their living situation work, as Pera described:

Mother works with us. You must, I think, you can't say now, if she doesn't agree with something, you know, you now will do what you want, you can't, you know.

[trans.]

It is Zdravka's role to make sure that each family member is cared for. Through changes in the family structure, her job has become more complicated. Before she has time for anyone outside of the family, she must see to the family's needs first.
Outside Community of Friends

There is a small circle of friends, though, that Zdravka has developed for herself which has become a support community for her (Figure 4.2):

Friends, Nenad and Kathy. He speak our language. Kathy speak, when she, when Kathy don't know something in our language, and we are, when we are in she's group, uh, her group, we must speak English [laughs]. It's easy. If you don't understand. If don't tell something, Nenad will help. Sometimes we speak Serbocroatian, sometimes English.

In addition to Ana and Goran, Zdravka has Nenad and Kathy, whom she met at The Farmers' Market in Mesa City in 1992. Nenad, a first generation American of Yugoslav parents is a graduate student who learned of Pera and Zdravka at the university. He sought them out at The Farmers' Market where they sold bread and vegetables from their garden and later, he introduced them to his wife, Kathy. This couple goes weekly to Zdravka and Pera's home at the end of a working day and frequently visits the bakery during working hours, especially when there is no crowd. Zdravka has become very fond of Nenad and Kathy.

Her other close relationship is with Janet, who is the wife of a dentist in Mesa City:

I want to speak with my dentist friend. She's an American woman. And we get together just one day, one day, lunch in the tea room... We talk about one and a half hour, about our children, about, she speak about, about her son. She has some problem
with him. I talk with, about my daughter. We have a nice conversation.

Janet agrees that their relationship is close. She believes that she and Zdravka are friends:

I think it's a easy-going relationship. And uh, I'm very fond of her. Um, and I think it's a sharing relationship.

Janet says that she knows it is a friendship because of the way that Zdravka related to her after she shared with Zdravka the battle she was experiencing with breast cancer:

They sent me flowers... Yah, they were very understanding. And Zdravka told me about a woman that she knew that had had breast cancer, you know, and that she, um, it was way past five years and she was doing fine. You know, so they, they were, uh, very supportive.

Janet went on to give me several other examples. Because Zdravka must work so much in order to help with the family business, she rarely has time to spend outside of the bakery with Janet, though she would like to do so on a more regular basis and tries to get together with her: "Janet, with her, with her I get out... We try at least one time a week to get together" [trans.]. These days, she mainly sees Janet if Janet comes in to the bakery for a visit.

These are her principal friendships, married women with children similar in age to Sanja, but also Kathy who is married with no children. I am part of her circle of friends, not as close to her as Kathy or Janet, but the difference is
that I can communicate with her in her first language. She has had another friend in Vesna, but Vesna and her husband, Marko, have moved to another state. Outside of the family, Vesna has probably been her closest Serbocroatian-speaking friend, and Zdravka helped her significantly in her packing to move.

Her other relationships are more peripheral. She sees her English conversation partner, Terry, an older woman in her 70's who, through her church, has helped internationals in Mesa City with English, for language help, but that relationship is more specific to English. Zdravka has also worked in the bakery with Olga, a Russian woman now gone from the business, and also with Aleks, a Serb student and a general friend of the entire family. Sometimes the family has had neighbors in Sunville over for dinner or has developed acquaintance relationships with members of a local Evangelical
Free church, and Zdravka has been a part of this, but these are not close relationships. A large part of the problem is that Zdravka does not return home many days until after 9:00 pm, and then she must help prepare a meal or finalize supplies for the next business day. Often she works until she goes to bed between 10:00 pm and 12:00 am. This is a typical pattern for her.

**Business Community**

Zdravka has a very limited relationship with anyone in the business community. She is responsible for buying food supplies for the lunch meal, so each morning and evening she makes purchases at a grocery store in Mesa City; she does speak with the store's employees, but usually only concerning her purchases. She rarely has direct contact with customers, unless she is left to run the breadstand at the open market which the family participates in during the summer months. Usually, though, Pera runs the breadstand. In the bakery, Zdravka remains mostly in the kitchen making soups, stews, and sandwiches. It is Pera who takes the orders, answers the phone, and takes care of the public relations work. Her role is to run operations behind the scene because Pera is the one who represents the family, in business and otherwise: "Pera is the leader. He is the head."
English

Pera is the representative, but Zdravka could take on more responsibility and not usurp his position. The problem is her perception of her ability to use English: "The language is my biggest problem" [trans.]. She feels more confident in some respects, but believes she must continue to improve:

I think that it's a little easier. Actually, I would be more satisfied if I could speak a little better.

[trans.] She also believes she will continue to improve:

I enjoy to learning. I think it is interesting [with a little laugh]. One day, I don't know when will be the day - who knows, I will speak almost English ten years, it will be same like my language.

Her enjoyment of learning the language has never waned since she began studying it in school as a girl. When I asked her if she enjoyed studying English in Yugoslavia, she enthusiastically responded:

Uh huh! Yes, and I like my professor. Good time, uh huh. And my mom, she meet, met my professor from primary school before she came here. She say, "Hellooo. Zdravka, she's my excellent student in everything." Surprise!

I had the impression that she added the "surprise" at the end of her comment because she believes that most Americans do not think that she speaks very well.

She ended her formal English education 23 years ago and has had no formal education since beginning her life in Iowa. She seeks language help for herself on an informal basis.
Terry, a friend of Janet's who has helped other non-native speakers of English with their English problems, helps Zdravka, too. Zdravka also meets with other second language learners of English once a month during the academic year, mostly wives of students at the local university, in an informal group setting. She also used to gather with others in the group once a week for informal parties, but her work schedule will keep her from that this year.

Her quiet, more reserved personality would seem to make learning English more difficult. She is not outspoken like her husband, but unlike her husband, her desire to learn English goes beyond necessity, and that is a benefit. Her language helps her to connect in friendships, and this is her main reason for learning it. Chodorow points out that "externally, as internally, women grow up and remain more connected to others" (Chodorow, 1978, p. 177). The need to live in connectedness with others is crucial for Zdravka.

Connecting with others in a new culture is difficult, but she has a positive view of her second language culture and the people who are a part of it:

And that's what I like here in America, that people want to help others, those they don't know... and those whose people they've never met. I mentioned to Janet, when she asked me where I was from, that English was a problem for me. She suggested this woman. That woman accepted me, took me seriously... That is the difference. With us it's very hard to find, to find someone who wants to help you, who
doesn't expect you to pay anything. That's very nice for me here. [trans.]

As has already been pointed out, a positive view of one's second language culture is a benefit in language acquisition (Richard-Amato, 1988, p. 59). In Zdravka's case, desire to learn English is motivated by her need for deeper friendships, and most of her English is learned through conversation with personal friends. She sees Janet and Kathy and also gathers with the women in her conversation group monthly:

Something is now organized. I think, every month I go to someone's place. There is a meeting; there is a party. [trans.]

Her motivation to continue is brought about by her desire to communicate with friends. Other researchers state that:

"...many more women than men define themselves in terms of their relationships and connections to others, a point which has also been made by Nancy Chodorow (1978) and Jean Baker Miller (1976). (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986, p. 8)

The fact that she was talking about serious life issues with Janet shows that she was able to peel away layers of surface level talk such as, "Hi, how are you?," and communicate more deeply using English.

In contrast, Zdravka views English for business as separate from her other English needs:

Pera travels around a bit more, you know, so he gets together with people a lot, but for me it's only needed because... It's not so needed. [trans.]
After thinking about it, she didn't see that she needed English very much in order to carry out her responsibilities in the business.

**Career Change**

Another reason that Zdravka does not use English very much in the business is because she does not enjoy what she is doing there. Pera is the one who enjoys the business. I have observed him mingling with customers, making jokes with delivery people, and carrying on light-hearted conversations with managers in the grocery stores that the bakery services with bread. He seems to really enjoy his new career. Zdravka only tolerates it and would like to work as a dentist again.

When I first met her, she had one very definite negative feeling about America:

You can't be a dentist or a veterinarian, and for that you also need a diploma. And even if you do have a diploma, they don't recognize it here...
You know, I went, I finished dental school. I also worked on teeth, like people do here. I went to a dental office here... and what he does, I've done. I've done everything. I know how to do everything, but I can't. You know, that is not nice for me...
That's the way the law is and you can't change it. [trans.]

Janet mentioned Zdravka's struggle as well:

I know that she, I think she more than Pera would like to get back into her profession. And uh, I don't think Pera had the love that she did...

Zdravka often told me how she was looking into different dental schools, trying to investigate the possibility of going
back to school in Iowa. She was looking at several options in the field of dentistry, as Janet pointed out:

And um, and like with, you know, Zdravka thinking she may want to pursue Dental Hygiene school... They've shut down schools in the state, so there's a waiting list at the community college.

But there was a problem even with this possible solution which Janet also mentioned:

And of course, they're not receptive to putting her on the waiting list until she's passed the TOEFL test... When she does pass the TOEFL test does that mean she has to wait a year or two years before she can get into the class?

So Zdravka was running into problems with her desire to re-enter her field, and English played a significant role. The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) was another hurdle she would need to cross.

Recently I spoke to her again about her plans, and she is giving up ideas at this point of entering dentistry at all. Now she plans to pursue something related to business:

It will be easier because it's cheaper, and there's the reason that dentistry is in St. Falcon. That's really far... Sanja is now going to college, and we need to think about paying for her.

I asked her if she thought she would enjoy studying business or if it was just a practical decision, and she said:

Practical. Hotel/Restaurant Management or Business, whatever is shorter... This year I think is not okay, a little more with the language.
Whatever she finally decides on, she still feels the need to work on her English. This is one reason why she seeks out help with conversational English. She sees it as a way to get out of the kitchen through furthering her education.

The Future

Zdravka's story is different from Pera's. He has been very positive in his outlook on life in America. His struggles are with the situation in the former Yugoslavia. He is free to start a new life here, in a business which he enjoys. While Zdravka enjoys the culture and her friendships with Americans, she is not happy with her role in America, whether it be in the business or in the increased stress in managing a larger household. Her struggles are here in the States, in daily life. She enjoys her friendships, but she has almost no time to participate in those friendships because she is unavailable as a result of her work schedule.

Her personal story is still a hopeful one. She is able to sacrifice her present desires because she feels she still may be able to change her situation in the future. Although she may never be able to return to dentistry, with further education, she may be able to leave her place in the kitchen and be more involved in the business aspect of the bakery. Even though she is not as excited about business as she is about dentistry, it may still open doors for her, so she pursues it.
What is also important to note is that Zdravka sees herself as a success, and that motivates her to keep trying and overcome her struggles; "even though I have not been very happy with my role in the business, I see that I am needed. Pera depends on me" [trans.]. For her, feeling needed makes her successful, so she can be a success in spite of her extenuating circumstances. As Brown and Gilligan point out about their own research findings, "Women... tended to speak of themselves as living in connection with others..." (Brown & Gilligan, 1992, p.2). They further describe how this can bring about:

"a relational crisis... a giving up of voice, an abandonment of self, for the sake of becoming a good woman and having relationships." (p. 2)

Zdravka is connected to Pera and that connection, that sense of being needed in the relationship, gives her a feeling of success, even if she gives up her own desires at the present time.
Sanja is a bright young woman, very mature for her 17 years. A good student in high school, she will graduate a semester early and begin her studies at the university in Mesa City in January of next year. This is quite an accomplishment for a teenager who has seen so much change in the past four years of her life. There is a saying in Serbocroatian, "Mlado se drvo savija", "bend the wood while it's young"; Sanja has been bent every which direction. She has experienced much change in her young life but has managed to come out on top.

Like the rest of her family, she did not want to stay in America, and her initial adjustment was difficult:

I didn't want to come. I didn't like it... I didn't know how it would be, and that it was too far from home.

[trans.]

Her high school English teacher, Carol, remembers it being traumatic:

It was just lucky that they took, that she took her diary which meant a lot to her, and a few of her favorite things with her.

Sanja knew she was leaving for America, but didn't know she was never going back; no one knew. What is important to glean from Carol's comments is that Sanja needed to take part of her personal history with her.
Sanja still treasures those things, but she, more than any of the others in her family, has assimilated into the culture she now finds herself in. Her diary is an example of this. When I asked her what she still writes in Serbocroatian, her response was, "I used to write in my diary, but I changed to English." Her tale is one of transition. "Mlado se drvo savija", change when you're young.

New Home

Sanja, a child of mixed ethnicity, Serb and Croat, was born and raised in Slavonia. She was one of the main reasons the family decided it was necessary to escape from the war, so she left with her mother and grandmother for America in December of 1991 when she was 14 years old. Her thoughts about America, at that time, were not positive:

I thought everyone killed everyone else because of cowboy films and that... Gangs, bandits, I didn't have a good picture of America.

She had been to America in 1987 when her maternal great-grandmother died, but "that was when I was small." Now she was older and had an understanding of America from what she had seen through the media.

Initially, she and her father and mother lived with her father's sister, but then her parents moved to Sunville two months after the family's arrival. Sanja stayed with her aunt
because she had begun to attend school in Mesa City. Zdravka said that she and Pera did not want to disrupt her education:

... Sanja started here in junior high in February, and we waited there for Sanja to finish junior high, and then she finished in June and moved in with us there... In September she started in Sunville High School.

[trans.]

Once again, Ana and Goran were there, fulfilling their responsibility to the family by taking care of Sanja.

Family Community

Establishing community was initially difficult for Sanja because of her language and culture barriers. She has managed to establish a network of others, though, very diverse in structure (Figure 5.1).

```
Sanja
  |   |
  |   |
Family   Friends   Business
  |   |   |   |
Pera   Ana   Mitch School Serbs
  |   |
Zdravka   Goran   Karl
  |   |
Dragana   Dragan
```

Figure 5.1 - Community Veza

Her family was and still is her principal network of relationships (Figure 5.2). Initially this was warm and welcoming, but now that she is older and is immersed in the lifestyle of an American teenager, she experiences
intercultural tensions. On the one hand, she is living in America, relating with her peers at school, and on the other, she is living in a tight-knit family structure. Carol describes it best:

There was a time period last spring where I was concerned ... She wanted to be like her friends, and there was some real conflict there. They wanted to hang on to their 'old world ways', which is typical, I mean. I tried to explain that to her... And she wanted so badly to be, to be American.

Carol uses the term 'old world ways' to refer to traditions entrenched in European family structures, according to her own family heritage, which is Norwegian. Family comes before all other people.

Sanja

Pera Zdravka Dragana Ana - Goran Dragan

Figure 5.2 - Family Veza

Her key relationships in the family are with her parents and her grandmother since they all live under one roof. Her principal caretaker during the week throughout the school year is her grandmother. Since Sanja's parents leave early in the morning for work, she gets up after they leave. She makes her own breakfast and then drives herself to school with one of the family cars. Her grandmother sleeps later in the morning but is there to greet her when she comes home from school.
Her parents feel very strongly about her responsibility to the family, so her father requires her to come home directly after school:

I have lots of things to do, so that's why I have to come home. I have to pack the breads... and then I have to study.

One responsibility to the family is helping with the business and Pera agrees, "You know, that's how I think. You must count on Sanja, on mother, on us" [trans.]. The family is working to help insure her future, so another responsibility is applying herself to her studies, as Zdravka points out: "Sanja is now going to college, and we need to think about paying for her" [trans.]. In order for Sanja even to think of going to college, she must be qualified, so she is expected to study diligently. Other studies of immigrant children show parents with similar expectations. Children of such parents do succeed:

It is ironic and paradoxical that the children of these refugees from Indochina have achieved educational success at a time when scholarly books, political debates, and blue-ribbon committees address the foreboding prospect of what many have come to refer to as America in decline. The irony is especially deep because the major reasons for the refugee children's success can be attributed to beliefs and family practices that, although non-Western in origin, coincide closely with traditional, mainstream, middle-class American presumptions about the values and means-ends relationships necessary for achievement. (Caplan, Choy, & Whitmore, 1991, p. 174)
Sanja is a good student and her high grades reflect that. She was also chosen as a Student of the Month in her school last year. Similar success has been noted in still other studies of refugee children. One such study of Punjabi immigrant children reported that: "Punjabi males... earned better grades and graduated from high school in larger numbers, proportionally, than Valleyside males" (Gibson, 1987, p. 293). Sanja's success matches theirs.

American parents tend to groom their children for a life independent from the rest of the family. For example, I went to a college only 25 miles from where I lived, but my parents believed it would be good for me to live in a dormitory, to help encourage my growing independence. When children fail to become independent, it becomes a problem for American parents. Talk show hosts sometimes interview families with grown children in their 20's or 30's living at home, as though they are disfunctional. For Americans, this is a situation that needs to be changed.

For Yugoslavs, this is normal and not a problem. During my four years in Yugoslavia, I only knew one unmarried woman who lived away from home. That was because she worked for the American Embassy and could afford her own apartment, and also because her parents lived in a town far away from her place of employment. Everyone else lived with their parents, including
newly married couples and couples with at least one child. Most of the time, the cost of living made it difficult for people to move away from home, and children and parents were expected to support one another.

**Community of Friends**

Sanja's two communities, family and friends, often clash. This has been a difficult balance for other refugees as well:

> The conflicting demands of their situation in the United States are captured by one Vietnamese respondent who states, "I wish to dissolve into American life but still remain culturally attached to Vietnam." (Caplan et al., 1991, pp. 95-96)

Sanja’s parents don't want her to be completely independent, while her friends are with people who are beginning to lead more independent lives (Figure 5.3).

![Figure 5.3 - Friend Veza](image)

Mitch, her former American boyfriend, was the most important relationship she had, outside of her family, in her life. Since he worked in the bakery, he spent a great deal of time with the family. He also lives in Sunville with his
sister, so he went to Sanja's home every day after finishing work. During the school year, though, Sanja's father restricted the amount of time Mitch and Sanja could be together. Mitch commented, "Pera doesn't really like me to be over here too much because he wants Sanja to study." Sanja and Mitch ended their relationship as boyfriend and girlfriend, and for a short while she saw another young American man, Karl, but that recently ended as well.

Sanja has few Serbs as friends. If there are Serbs visiting her parents in the bakery, she may talk with Aleks, a university undergraduate student, but she usually spends time with her younger cousin, Dragan, instead of communicating with the others.

Most of her peer friendships are with students at her high school. The student body at Sunville High School mostly draws American children from small towns and farms in the surrounding area. Most are white, but some are Hispanic, children of Mexican migrant workers. There are meat packing plants which draw these workers, but recently some of these plants have closed and families have moved away. The school also has three foreign exchange students from Germany, Finland, and Mexico.

Perhaps drawn to them by their common bond as students of English as a Second Language, Sanja lists these foreign
exchange students among her friends. She also has four other close friends who are American, one of whom also has Hispanic heritage. Her relationships are more diverse than what an average Iowa teen might have.

I asked her how often she is able to spend time with her friends:

Six days out of the... whole month. Yah, uh, if I'm not working. We go to McDonald's or we go to other friend's house and talk to him for a little bit or we just go and walk around and talk.

Sanja would like to spend more time with her friends, but she must carry out her role in the family. Other family members have expectations she tries to fill. One of those is helping the rest of the family cope with English, since she is the one who has acquired it the most successfully.

English

English was a subject that Sanja liked to study in school back in Slavonia. She studied it 45 minutes a day, four days a week, during the school year for four years before coming to the States. She described what it was like:

We read, uh, books. We had pictures in the books... And there was, you know, dialogue and stuff, and then we used to have dictations, and stuff like that... We worked in small groups.

This is similar to the types of activities used in the States for teaching ESL.
Her school offered several foreign languages and, fortunately for Sanja, she was able to be in the class which learned English:

I don't know how I would handle Russian because then over here we would speak... I wanted to do English because, you know, my aunt is here, and everybody else, so it would be much easier for me to talk to them... And because we came to United States, you know, when I started learning it.

Her last year of junior high was completed in Mesa City, and it was there that she took an ESL class and also had a mentor, an older woman who was a volunteer, who would meet with her during breaks in the school day, such as lunch or study hall. The ESL class met twice a week, and although she thought it helped her, she also said:

It was a little bit boring, because the stuff we did I used to, I had learned all that stuff, you know. The other classes were much more interesting... It was easier here, you know... Over and over, saying the same thing over and over and over, okay.

For Sanja, immersion in other classes stimulated her more in language learning. She had trouble in the beginning understanding what was happening in those classes, but "my aunt helped me. She use to translate stuff to me."

School, in general, is not as difficult for her in Iowa as it was in Slavonia:

It's kind of easier. Because over there we had, like, Latin and some other languages, and over here we just have English and Spanish. We're doing more stuff over there than we're doing over here. We're going through the details.
She feels that there were more details she needed to know when she studied in the former Yugoslavia and that she spent more time on homework there. Even though she is taking such subjects as Chemistry, Physics, Advanced Math, and Composition, she says she spends only one to two hours a night on homework, and she doesn't do homework on Friday nights or Saturdays, partly because she works in the bakery on Saturdays.

English is not a big hurdle for her now, and there are only a couple of problems that she feels she needs to work on:

With grammar, and all those articles like "the" and stuff like that. I forget that sometimes. I don't know. That's why I have somebody check it every time I do it. I show my best friend or somebody else... or the teacher.

Carol confirmed that these errors are persistent, but that Sanja has greatly improved through her own efforts:

I sat down with her, and we, I got, I asked permission, and I used my purple pen, and we just marked up her paper but good. And to be honest, I only had to do that one semester, and then she started marking it up before I got to it. And you know, she made progress very quickly, very quickly.

I saw some of Sanja's work on file in Carol's office, and it was obvious that Sanja was very conscientious. Her own purple pen corrections were quite apparent on her work.

Sanja the English Teacher

While riding home with Pera, Zdravka, and Sanja one afternoon after work, I observed "Sanja the English Teacher."
Pera was speaking on the cellular phone, and Sanja heard him make a language error. She appeared quite frustrated, as if she had tried to help him before with the same error, so she yelled the correct form to him while he was still on the phone. I have observed her several times correcting different family members. Carol recalled a comment Sanja made about Pera's language learning:

I'd every so often ask how her family was doing, and there was one comment, it just, she goes, "Well, I don't know if my father is ever going to get it." Meaning the English tongue, you know.

Family members believe she has acquired the language much better than any of the rest of them:

Zdravka: English is needed for school. She really knows it well, better than all the rest of us.

[trans.]

Pera: Our daughter is speaking English, and, you know, we're very proud.

It is Sanja who writes up the menu boards at the bakery, and if Pera is gone from the store and she's working, then she answers the phone. Sanja serves customers, too, instead of helping her mother in the kitchen. She also helps her mother send greeting cards for birthdays, Christmas, illness and when thanking someone for a gift. Cards are usually not sent for these occasions in Yugoslavia.
Mlado Se Drvo Savija

Change when you’re young. She has had to do just that. Although she still struggles with living in two different worlds, two different cultures, she is making adjustments. When she begins her studies at the university this fall, she will live in Mesa City again and not at home. Her teacher sees this as a way for Sanja to cope with these two cultures pulling her in different directions:

We all as seniors want to escape and go to college... She can have a little calmer time, and it would be nice to visit because she loves them dearly.

Like a young, green tree branch, she has had to bend in different directions, but she has adjusted well. In three years she has become a rather typical American high school senior with friends, a job, and occasional conflicts with family, excited about graduating and heading into the future. She believes she has a “golden touch:”

School is going well. I’m getting high marks, and I’m going to college in the spring. I have a job in the bakery, and I’m good in English.

Everything is going well for her, and she sees herself as personally successful.
VI. DRAGANA:  
"LIKE A LITTLE WATER IN THE PALM OF YOUR HAND"

The last Saturday of every month, those of us who are speakers of Serbocroatian gather at the bakery in Mesa City in the evening for good food and conversation. The first time I joined the group, I met Dragana. She was very surprised to learn that an American in Iowa knew how to speak her mother tongue, and she warmly accepted me. For me, she became "kao malo voda na dlanu." In Serbocroatian, if something is special to someone, the people say it is, "like holding a little drop of water on the palm of your hand." My heart went out to this woman who had left everything behind her to stay in America with her children, even though she was in her early 60's, a time when many begin to rest from life's hardships.

Losing Everything

Dragana was born to Serbian parents living in Vojvodina, the autonomous region of Serbia which had a large population of Hungarians. As a child, she played in the streets with children of Serbian and Hungarian ethnicity, learning both languages equally well;

Hungarian I spoke from the time I was small...  
When I learned Hungarian, I didn't study it anywhere; I learned it through play.  
[trans.]

It was normal for her to be with others who were ethnically different from her.
She grew up in the city, received a diploma from an agricultural vocational technical school, married a Serb and moved to a smaller town in Serbia to raise a family. When Pera was eight and Ana three, the family moved to Slavonia where both Dragana and her husband worked in their professions. Sadly, her husband died fairly young, leaving her a widow in middle age.

For thirty years, she lived peacefully amongst Serbs and Croats, but then the war began, and she fled. With bitterness, she describes what she left of her life in her homeland:

That was some kind of psychological attack. There was a war... It was very hard for me. Our whole lives we gave something. We had a house, and a small apartment, which we worked for all our lives, and our children studied there, you know. Now, all of a sudden, I had to leave all of that behind, and I came with only one suitcase. I had learned how to live at a nice standard, a nice way of life. We had social security; I had a pension.

[trans.]

She further explains that there is now a Croatian woman living in her home:

She says if I come back that there is enough room in the house for me to live there, too. Can you imagine?! It is my home, and she has the nerve to say something like that!

[trans.]

Because of the war, Dragana has also lost her pension money and all other assets. At 60 years old, she is beginning life over with one suitcase to her name.
Community

Dragana's network of people in America consists mainly of her family (Figure 6.1). She is isolated from people because of her role in the business and because of her limitations with English. The only people outside of her family that she communicates with are other native speakers of Serbocroatian and Megan, her co-worker in the bread bakery in Sunville.

\[\text{Dragana} \quad | \quad \text{Family} \quad | \quad \text{Co-worker} \quad | \quad \text{Megan} \]

\[\text{Pera - Zdravka} \quad | \quad \text{Ana - Goran} \quad | \quad \text{Sanja} \quad | \quad \text{Dragan} \]

Figure 6.1 - Community Veza

The family home in Sunville is an old farm house. There is a small acreage with a large garden where they grow their own vegetables for use in the business, a run-down barn, and a couple of storage sheds. Their home is located about two miles from town, out in the country.

Pera and Zdravka have put on an addition to the kitchen, so there is a large work area with several ovens, a large mixer, a bread shaper, bread storage shelves, and plenty of counter space. The equipment is older but in good working
condition, bought very inexpensively at auctions. Dragana works here from about 8:45 am until 4:00 pm, and also in the evening for a few hours, six days a week, baking bread for the business down in Mesa City.

Outside of her co-workers, who work with her during the daytime, she has no contact with other native speakers of English. The work days are very busy because the business services two grocery stores in Mesa City and an open market during the summer two half-days a week. This is in addition to the store itself where the family serves lunch and sells bread to customers. This makes conversation with her co-worker limited because there is much to do to prepare for each day.

Saturdays, Dragana goes to Mesa City and stays with her daughter. She may go to the bakery to spend time with Pera, Zdravka, Sanja, and other native speakers of Serbocroatian who drop by. Once a week, Nenad and Kathy go to Sunville for a visit, and periodically there are out of town visitors who are native speakers of her mother tongue, but most of the time she is at home in Sunville, away from the mainstream of American society or even other Serbs.

In many ways, it appears that she is a prisoner of her home, isolated even from those who live in it with her.
Myerhoff, in her studies with the elderly in a Jewish community, found that those who had immigrated to America:

...gained physical safety and security for themselves and their children but lost their families of origin and communities; they gained access to educational and economic opportunities for their progeny but ultimately this led to severe separation from the following generation, and eventually contributed to their present physical and cultural separation from their children. (Myerhoff, 1978, p. 106)

Dragana spends six days out of seven baking bread in Sunville, and the seventh day she patiently waits in Mesa City through the day for her family to finish the day's work. With the work schedule of her son, Dragana rarely sees him. Sanja's assimilation into American life also makes her less likely to communicate with Dragana; so, in some ways this makes Dragana isolated from those closest to her.

She does not have a driver's license because she cannot understand the questions for the driving test. She could have a translator, but she says:

Even if I did drive, what would I do if something happened to me on the road? I couldn't say anything to anyone except "Hello, hello".

[trans.]

So, she remains stranded at home every day except Saturday.

Family Responsibility

Her family takes care of her "kao malo voda na dlanu." She does not need to go grocery shopping, serve customers, deal with expanding the business, or pay the bills for the
family. Her role is to bake bread and keep an account of purchases Pera and Zdravka have made for the business as well as money that has come in from the business. She does this by recording transactions from receipts or statements Pera or Zdravka gives her.

These are all important responsibilities she carries out for the family. In addition, she is home for Sanja when the girl comes home from school. But when I asked her what she felt her role in the family was, she responded, "Nothing in the family, nothing, except the business."

She feels that she is a burden on the others:

I worked, and we paid our whole lives for all of our insurance, to have, when you retire. I always wanted to not depend on my children, that we would have something to live on, that we wouldn't be dependent on them.

[trans.] This desire cannot be brought to fruition since she has no means of living on her own.

Like other members of the family, Dragana also sees the complications of having a three-generation household:

To live together, that wasn't the smartest. That's three generations, you know. It's normal that there would be confrontations, misunderstandings, you know.

[trans.] At this point, there appears to be no alternative, but again, others in the family must look out for her. Families take care of one another.
Her lack of contact with other people is a circular problem:

The problem is I can't have contact with other people... I can't talk... "Alice, hello, hello", and then we only look at each other... When they know that I don't know, what can I say... I don't like to mix with people when I can't converse... Listen! If you don't know the language, you are the same as a mute... That's exactly how I feel.

[trans.]

She would like to be with others, but she can't communicate with them, so she doesn't "mix with people." Spending time with people would help her acquire the language, but her shyness about communication hinders her. Inhibition can be an affective factor that negatively influences second language acquisition (Richard-Amato, 1988, p. 62).

Her English background before coming to the States was very limited. She studied English as a child "maybe fifty years" ago:

One hour... no every day, maybe in week perhaps... two or three [years]... in high school... I listened dictat... we memorized... In school, I don't like English... Because very hard... not watch television, not on the radio... just teacher.

Her class sessions used the audiolingual method of language teaching. Patterns of the second language (sounds, words, grammatical patterns) were learned until they became habitual. Errors were to be avoided, but a main source of errors was
interference from her first language transfer of patterns to English (Ellis, 1990, pp. 6-7).

Dragana had to do a tremendous amount of memorization, which is part of the technique involved in this method. She still remembers parts of texts she memorized:

We had to memorize the text, not songs, some everyday kind of text. I think that's hard to do even in your own language. You know, I didn't like that. That didn't work for me; I didn't like that.

[trans.]

This did not help much, and she had no outside assistance with English either. All that she received was from the classroom, from a teacher who did not speak English as a native language:

We never learned conversation at all, you know... But now, let's say, I'm learning that language which has a difficult way of pronunciation, and I have no opportunity to hear it spoken... When I learned it in school, except from the teacher, I never heard it spoken.

[trans.]

Now it's difficult for her to learn the language, not primarily because of her poor learning experiences in Yugoslavia, but because of other factors, such as her limited contact with others, and her age:

I am 64; I forget new things. When I read, I think that it's clear, and I know. As soon as I close the book, I forget it... It's much easier to forget.

[trans.]

Sanja has tried to help her pick up more of the language, but that ended in disaster:
My granddaughter, she gave me help, but she suddenly started to be very strict. And why, I don't know... She was like a teacher, strict and that's it. She didn't listen; she didn't teach anymore. And she, "How come you don't know that? We went over that yesterday!" And our studying is over.

[trans.]

The others in the family do not think it is necessary for Dragana to know English. "For her, it's not needed much, actually." [trans.]. They would like her to be corrected by Megan, her co-worker, if she makes mistakes or errors, but other than that, they do not seek out other help for her.

Megan has trouble correcting her, though, so even that amount of assistance is limited:

I'm suppose to correct her. It's very hard for me to correct someone because I don't, you're um, never suppose to correct your elders or correct somebody older.

Whatever the reason, a general lack of correction by others frustrates Dragana as well:

Americans won't correct me if I say something wrong in English. They tell me they won't correct me. I begged a friend's mother, "Please correct me, tell me if I say something wrong. I know that I make mistakes, like what I say doesn't make any sense." Nothing. She doesn't say anything.

[trans.]

Her limitations are not only those which pertain to her but also the role others will not take in helping her, even with simple correction.
As Important as Bread

Though the others in her family do not see that she has a need for English, she believes she has a strong need. When I asked her how necessary English was for her, this was her response, "Jako mi je potreban; potreban kao hleb!" (English "is very needed, as needed as bread!"). Dragana desperately wants to learn English because she is unable to function alone in American culture without it.

She definitely has almost complete isolation from Americans. I have seen her pacing up and down the block outside the store:

Everyone goes to work. I then put my hands in my pockets, walk a little bit there, around the area... on the streets. People greet me on the streets, like we know each other... really nice, really happy. Now, if I knew how to talk, it would be like old acquaintances... Since I don't know, then I run away. I don't say anything.

[trans.]

This is why English is "potreban kao hleb."

She is positive about Americans, which is something that research has shown to be helpful in language acquisition:

We go to market, and only, "Excuse me, excuse me," and that's how they are, how they smile, and how like we have met each other, we don't know when... That's how people seem to me.

[trans.]

While Dragana would like to be a part of her new culture, she can only peer at it from the outside and guess what it must be like.
Her desire to keep trying to learn English little by little is evident. She watches television, listens to the radio, and reads some of Sanja's English grammar books before going to sleep at night. But there are still persistent barriers, like her isolation from learning language in context, physical factors like her age, and the fact that she is tired from working so hard all day.

Communication Breakdown

Communication breakdown is another barrier. When Dragana talks in short phrases about what needs to be done during the work day, Megan has no trouble understanding her, but problems arise when they step beyond that line:

Usually, when we're having problems communicating, it's not about the bakery stuff. It's about something that my kids did, um, something that's going on in my life.

When problems occur, Dragana and Megan must resort to waiting for someone else in the family to come home:

You just couldn't communicate, couldn't draw a picture. You would say it to Goran or Pera or Zdravka... Usually, we just kind of put up our hands, and we know we can't explain it.

They have been able to accept this as part of their relationship. Dragana appreciates Megan's patience, but she believes Megan is an exception:

Megan is careful when she sees that I don't understand, and then she looks for words to use which she knows I'll understand... She understands me, but I see that other people don't understand me.
But, Dragana keeps trying to improve, trying to work through her limitations.

**Persistence**

She is a strong woman. In spite of losing everything in her former country and needing to depend on her children for support, she still keeps going. She wants to be a contributing member of the family, and though she already does a significant amount of work, she still wants to do more. This is part of her motivation for continuing to learn English on her own; if she could communicate better, then perhaps she could take some of the pressure off of the rest of the family.

Dragana, in spite of her sorrows and frustrations, is also a success story in the minds of most Americans. Not content to just sit out her days in a rocking chair on the front porch, she continues to learn, in spite of the limitations put on her. But, in her own mind she will never be completely successful in America:

> Before the war, I was successful in Yugoslavia, but now I am not successful. Everything I had was lost in the war, and I can't be successful in [America] when everyone I love in Yugoslavia is suffering.  

[trans.]

This, again, confirms Brown and Gilligan’s findings that women see "themselves as living in connection with others" (Brown & Gilligan, 1992, p. 2). Her success is not experienced as an individual, but rather, as a collective unit with others. For
her, success depends on what happens to friends and family in Yugoslavia.

It also depends on what will happen in her immediate family situation in America:

...most Yugoslavs would undoubtedly consider that in a normal course of events children will care for their elderly parents as a moral imperative and that parents in turn will view this relationship not as one of demeaning dependency but rather as an opportunity to further engage in the exchanges which have typified their entire life cycle. (Simic, 1978, p. 103)

These "exchanges" are those which "link the generations" (p. 103). With the American value of self-reliance and independence so strong, Sanja is already breaking away from her grandmother's influence. Pera and Zdravka work long days away from home, and though they provide for Dragana's physical needs, her isolation is not addressed. To the American mind, her success is her perseverance, but her own vision of success is clearly not being realized.
VII. IMPLICATIONS:
WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Once the tales are told, we cannot just leave them without looking into the insights they offer us. We must use these stories, and learn from them in order to help those who might find themselves in similar situations. As experts in the field of ESL, we must apply what we learn from these examples.

Why Does It Matter?

Since we only looked at a portrait of one family, what difference does it make? We cannot make predictions across the board that everyone will have the same experience as they did in coming to the States. This is true, but what this study does do is help us put a face on some of the faceless in our society.

We don't usually look deeply into the lives of new immigrants or, especially, into the lives of refugees. We may watch tragic tales on news programs of refugees fleeing their troubled homelands and get a little teary-eyed at their struggle to get here, but the story usually ends at the airport. We all cheer at their safe arrival to the "promised land," but their stories do not end there. Often, old struggles are replaced by new ones as people begin to learn how to function in their new society. How can we help make that adjustment as smooth as possible?
Establishing Community

One of the issues the members of this family remind us of is the fact that some adjustments depend on the individual herself. We in ESL can try to identify those issues, inform the person, and suggest possible avenues for assistance, but it is up to the individual to deal with her own life.

The most crucial area that needs to be addressed is the establishment of community, a social structure to offer support. This came out strongly in the study. One of my premises at the start was that there was built-in community in most large cities, but that there may not be as much access to one in smaller towns.

How big is a community? This family began with a community of two, Goran and Ana. They were the liaison people between Pera, Zdravka, Sanja and Dragana and American society. Because they knew English and had been in Mesa City for almost ten years, they were able to foresee troublesome situations and make the family's transition much easier. For those who do not have this pre-established community, several steps can be taken.

In addressing the issue of setting up a community for new immigrants, the United States Government must first identify areas in the country where they could relocate new arrivals. Agencies, such as the Department of Human Services' Bureau of
Refugee Services, are excellent resources for this. They can assess where different ethnic communities are located in their States and facilitate the smooth assimilation of new immigrants into these communities. This is why many of the Bosnian refugees coming into Iowa are being settled in the Des Moines area (Bureau of Refugee Services: Annual Report, 1993, p. 29). They are being kept together instead of being dispersed throughout the state.

These agencies should, and do, have bilingual staff available to help with adjustment in the initial stages. The Bureau of Refugee Services in Iowa has a bilingual staff for Laotian, Tai Dam, Hmong, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Russian, and Serbocroatian (Introduction to the Bureau of Refugee Services, 1993, p. 6).

If there is no community available where the refugee is located, then there should be resource people provided by the State to assist people in adjustment. These resource people could come from satellite facilities within a state associated with agencies like the one mentioned above. In addition to possible staff people such as social workers and bilingual speakers, there should be ESL resource people. A key to helping people adjust is providing them with ESL assistance. The Bureau of Refugee Services also provides instruction in ESL, and it is not limited to ESL instruction for everyday
Communication, but emphasizes "English as it relates to obtaining and retaining a job" (p. 6).

Availability

Learning English is crucial to getting a job, but sometimes the urgency of improving English is superceded by the job a refugee holds. This brings us to another important point: work is crucial to refugee survival. They also have a need to establish the next generation, so that it won't need to struggle as the first one did. Christine Finnan, in her 1987 article on Vietnamese refugees, quotes a Vietnamese refugee's attitude about work:

My future is nothing, and my present is nothing. I want my children to be better than my life. I think they can get through if I work and save money. They would like to go to school. (Finnan, 1987, p. 318)

This same attitude is apparent in the family in this study. Zdravka mentions this:

The more you work, the more you have, and if you don't work, then you don't have anything anywhere... You do more to get more because the needs get bigger. There isn't free time.  
[trans.]

This family spends a tremendous amount of time working. They feel they must work in order to survive and ensure something for Sanja's future. As Zdravka pointed out, "Sanja is now going to college, and we need to think about paying for her" [trans.]. A typical work day for each family member begins
between 6:00 am and 7:00 am (8:30 am for Dragana) and goes until after 10:00 pm. This is the case seven days a week (six for Dragana), so they fully admit that they have no time for learning English in a formal setting.

Each of the family members would like to progress in learning English. Their reasons may be different, from Sanja's desire to improve her accent to Dragana's desire to leave the house and hold a basic conversation with Americans.

For some of the family, though, progress is not such a necessity. Sanja does not have a need for further ESL instruction, as her teacher, Carol, suggests:

When she came, she was like a sixth grader, American sixth grader, and I would say she is comparable to her classmates now.

And Pera is content with his level of English at this point:

And what I've learned over two years is good enough... And I'm totally aware that I'm not never speak correct English, and I don't care very much.

But for Zdravka and Dragana it is different. It is people like them who need the attention of ESL professionals.

Zdravka wants to get out of the daily grind of the business. She believes that her job in the bakery is vital, but she would like to change her job situation in the future. Language is one of her major obstacles to pursuing a career change. Her greatest dream would be to re-enter dentistry, but even her second choice of business or hotel/restaurant management is a problem: "This year I think is not okay, a
little more with the language" [trans.]. But how will she get more help with the language? Her schedule is impossible:

I have a program for evening class, for morning class, but it's not possible. I'm in morning, busy my store and must make food for lunch, and then I must go home. I don't have time for evening class... I think that it is not possible. I wouldn't be able.

She does not see that there is any solution to her problem.

Dragana is at home six days a week in Sunville. She must work during the day, and at night, "I am tired" [trans.]. Since she must work and doesn't drive even if she did have time to go somewhere, she is dependent on others to take her places. Her isolation makes her unavailable to traditional ESL programs, which require people to go to them.

Solutions

For people in Zdravka's and Dragana's situations, I would suggest that there is a need for an ESL program which could assist learners outside of a school setting. In Mesa City, there is an expensive, year-long intensive English program which is staffed by university professionals in ESL. It meets all day, five days a week, and the cost prohibits many from enrolling. There is another program available through the community college which meets in a satellite setting in Mesa City, and other programs run by church groups. The problem with these programs is that most of them are targeted to the international student community in some way, whether to actual students or family members of students, and all are set up for
students to come to them. Pera and his family cannot go to a class; they must have someone come to them.

In Mesa City, there is a Small Business Development Center (SBDC) where Pera met Bill. This is located at the local university. In situations where there is a resource for helping small business owners, an ESL professional could be made available through the agency to those business owners who do not speak English proficiently.

In Mesa City, since the intensive English program is also located at the university, the SBDC could establish a link with university ESL professionals and provide ESL resource people to the non-native speakers of English in the business community. Pera and his family are not the only speakers of English as a second language. With a large population of international students, many businesses such as Chinese restaurants, Asian food markets, Asian video stores, and Brazilian restaurants employ non-native speakers who are serving local customers. ESL professionals could go to these businesses on a weekly or bi-weekly basis for language instruction. One way this could be accomplished would be to provide supervised internship or assistantship positions for undergraduate or graduate students enrolled in the Teaching English as a Second Language program. Funding may complicate this, but if the university, the SBDC, and the second language learners themselves contributed financially to the program,
significant costs to any one of the three participants would be defrayed. This is a learner-centered approach instead of a teacher-centered approach. This would meet some of Zdravka’s needs.

Something similar could be established for people in Dragana’s situation. The Bureau of Refugee Services and other agencies like it, such as Lutheran Social Services or the U.S. Catholic Conference, could send ESL professionals on home visits. These professionals could be based throughout the state and would work within a certain radius of their area.

Is there really a need for such programs in a state like Iowa? Yes. There are immigrants, and refugees in Iowa, including in rural areas. I have already mentioned the Mexican populations in small towns like Sunville, but there are also significant Asian populations.

Future research now needs to be done in investigating the feasibility of these suggestions. While voluntary resettlement agencies like The Bureau of Refugee Services, The Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, and The United States Catholic Council report the numbers of refugees they work with to a central reporting agency (Bureau of Refugee Services Annual Report, 1993, p. 26), these agencies could go further by reporting how many of these individuals are involved in ESL programs, and what types of programs they are enrolled in: general survival English,
English for employment purposes, or English for further educational purposes. If this information is lacking or if current programs do not meet learner needs, then ESL assessment needs to be done.

Once this information is known, then more research needs to be conducted concerning curriculum, teacher training, and financial commitments for materials, training, salaries, and even transportation of ESL professionals to businesses or homes. What other alternatives might be possible? Adult education extension programs utilizing computer software, internet programs, or television programs might offer other solutions. One place to start in researching options is to find out what types of programs surrounding states currently implement. This would not only assist Iowa’s small town refugees, but also small town refugees in other states.

Schools in rural settings could also be better equipped to handle ESL needs. Carol, Sanja’s high school composition teacher, had a suggestion that would assist her in teaching non-native speakers of English:

I would suggest that anytime someone comes in, foreign language, that there is a resource, that they could get on a weekly program in the school system itself... Just like we have for the social psychologists at the lower grade levels, once a week they're in the building, once a week they'll get special help, then they can have a program set up with their regular teachers, and then we try to follow the plan, and implement it within our classroom.
Carol is not suggesting that her school even have a full-time ESL professional. It would be important to have someone come in to help students once a week or even biweekly, but the other teachers in the school could also go through some training to meet students' needs the rest of the week. She goes on to say that without this type of help she now:

...tries to do it within my classroom for the kids as best I can, being not trained for it in a way, just going by the "seat of my pants."

Carol reflects on Sanja's situation when Sanja first began attending her class:

If she had had someone to go to once a week, and have specific instruction, that would have been great, that would have been so helpful for her.

Even though Sanja had ESL support through a pull-out program in Mesa City before coming to Sunville, she was given only one semester and found the program to be boring. Carol's suggestion provides a solution to the problem, and Sanja's own comments support it as well: "The other classes were much more interesting." Sanja learned more English when she engaged in subject matter while immersed in regular classes. Teacher training in basic principles of ESL might assist both teachers and second language students in the regular classroom. This could be accomplished by implementing teacher workshops with ESL professionals. Follow up reviews through classroom observation and refresher workshops by these professionals.
would also help to assess the quality of instruction in the immersion classroom for the second language learner.

**Affective Factors**

But having available resources is often not enough. Affective factors play a large role in the learner's second language acquisition. The members of this family, for the most part, have a positive view of American culture, American people, and the English language. For Pera, especially, his Slavic personality is beneficial in that he is assertive toward assimilating into the culture and even in working in improving his communicative ability in English. This personality trait helps him and vicariously helps the rest of the family since "he is the head of the family," as Zdravka says. He takes care of the rest of the family by managing the business with the help of Goran and Ana.

Not everyone who comes to America deals with his new life in the same way. Many refugees may struggle because they may not have wanted to live in America. It is especially important for them to be placed within a community of others, preferably a similar ethnic or linguistic community. They need people in their lives who will take initiative with them in helping to meet some of their linguistic, cultural, and everyday survival needs and who will take roles as facilitators within the American culture. The ESL professional is a natural facilitator because of the crucial
role language plays in a refugee's adjustment. The family in this study was especially encouraged by helpful people, as Zdravka excitedly pointed out:

And that's what I like here in America, that people want to help others, those they don't know... and those whose people they've never met.  [trans.]

Many affective factors cannot be changed, but some can be addressed. ESL professionals can leave a positive impression with non-native speakers in America. They can help to motivate new arrivals by their own willingness to meet needs.

Moving Forward

The questions I began with have some answers now. How did the family's expectations of life in America affect their acculturation? A positive view of America and the American people has helped them to acculturate, or at least view acculturation as positive, as in the case of Dragana who would like to be able to communicate with Americans some day. In what ways did their knowledge of English help them or hinder them in their journey? The more their English has developed, the more they have found their "niche" in American society. And above all, their formation of "veza" has helped them to continue to pursue acculturation. They do not feel that they are completely alone. Their community supports are the social structures that have kept them going.
This study has been designed to benefit those of us who would call ourselves ESL professionals, as well as those who work with refugees in other capacities, by making us more aware of needs that immigrants, and especially refugees, might have that play a role in their language learning and in their assimilation into American culture. Another goal of this study is to suggest that special ESL needs exist in rural communities, not just in cities.

"Immigrants accounted for 37 percent of the country's growth in the 1980s" (Green, 1993, p. 2A). It is important to help meet the needs of these newest arrivals, and learning English is one of the most important needs they have. ESL professionals are learning from mistakes in past language instruction. We have, for example, advanced in our instructional methods, no longer using the audiolingual method that proved so unsuccessful for Dragana, but rather more learner-centered approaches. This is a step forward, but on-going research must continue in order to provide the best possible environment for second language learners to acquire the English language. We cannot ignore these people, especially because, as Green points out:

... the influx of immigrants also provides the United States with opportunities to develop a multilingual workforce better able to compete in the increasing global marketplace. (p. 2A)
The successes of Pera, Zdravka, Sanja, and Dragana, in spite of problems they faced in their journeys, provide examples of what might be possible for others in similar situations. Although the stories of this family are unique, they provide insight into the challenges likely to be faced by new immigrants to the United States, especially in often overlooked rural areas.
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Other Pertinent Sources


APPENDIX:
SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview #1 - In Serbocroatian - All Participants

Personal Background

Where have you lived in the former Yugoslavia?

When were you first in an English speaking country? Where was that? Why were you there?

When did you first come to the U.S.A.? Where were you? Why were you here?

When did you leave the former Yugoslavia to begin your new life in the U.S.A.?

What were your reasons for leaving?

Where did you enter the U.S.A.?

Was anyone there to meet you? Who?

Where was your first destination after arrival?

Where have you lived since coming to the U.S. on a more permanent basis?

What is your status in the States? Resident? Temporary resident?

What were your impressions of American culture before you came here?

What did you think the American people were like?

How did you think the individual functioned, or what responsibilities did you think Americans had toward their society?

What did you think the American government was like?

What did you think the American economy was like?
What have been some of your frustrations in dealing with living in the American culture?

How have your preconceived perceptions of the American culture (whether negative or positive) been challenged?

How has knowing the language affected your perceptions?

What do you feel you have accepted about U.S. culture? What don't you accept?

How do you feel you have been accepted into the U.S. culture by Americans? How do you feel you haven't?

Does this affect your language learning in any way?

What is your role in the family structure? What are your responsibilities?

How has this affected your need for competence in communicating in English?

Has your family structure changed since coming to the U.S.A.?

Does knowledge of English play a role in these changes?

How does this affect your motivation to learn English?

How necessary is English for you? For your family members?

**Interview #2 - In English - All Participants**

**Learning English**

What language do you use at home? At school? At work? With friends?

Do you read in your first language?

What script are you most comfortable with, Roman alphabet or Cyrillic?

Where do you read in Serbocroatian?
What do you read?
Do you write in your first language?
What script do you use, Roman or Cyrillic?
Where do you write in Serbocroatian?
What do you write in Serbocroatian?
What level of education did you complete in the former Yugoslavia?
What level have you completed in the U.S.A., if any?
Did you study English in the former Yugoslavia?
How did you learn it? How were you taught it? How many days a week, hours a day? What happened in the classroom?
Did you do anything outside of class (e.g. tutor, English Institute)?
Did you want to learn English? Why or why not?
Did you enjoy learning English?
Have you studied English since coming to the U.S. on a permanent basis?
Have you paid for any help in English?
Have you enjoyed it?
Are you studying English now? What are you doing?
Since you live in a rural community, do you feel there are adequate resources for studying English?
What could be done by you, by the State of Iowa, by local colleges or universities, to improve access to ESL programs in the rural community?
With whom do you speak English? Serbocroatian?
Estimate in percentages how much of the day you speak in English and how much you speak in Serbocroatian.

Interview #3 - In English - Pera

Follow-up Questions to Observation Day

Why did you choose English for this interview?

Who controls money flow? How is it decided it will be used?

What type of role does a spiritual life play in your family, if any?

How do you respond when people point out a language error?

When there is a breakdown in communication, what strategies do you use to get to some kind of understanding?

I see that you have a sense of humor. How is humor different in the former Yugoslavia from here? What types of problems have you had with your humor, with people understanding you or you understanding others?

How involved are you in your daughter's education, as far as communication with the school system is concerned?

Interview #3 - In Serbocroatian - Zdravka

Follow-up Questions to Observation Day

Why did you choose Serbocroatian for this interview?

Who helped you establish your business in the U.S.?

When you write notes (e.g. phone messages, grocery lists, recipes, etc.), do you use English, Serbocroatian or a mixture of both?

Why, when Pera is present with you, does he ask questions in English with English-speakers and not you? Is it a difference in your personalities?
Do you feel stress initially when someone asks you something in English?

Whose idea was it to extend the business to servicing grocery stores in Mesa City? Who went to set up these business extensions?

Who takes care of bills at home? At work?

Do you write anything in English besides forms, any longer pieces of writing like letters or papers?

You mentioned you were interested in studying business. Why? How will that help you in the future? Why are you changing your ideas about dentistry?

**Interview #3 - In English - Sanja**

**Follow-up Questions to Observation Day**

Why did you choose English for this interview?

What types of extra-curricular activity do you participate in?

Why do you drive to school instead of take the bus?

How is school different here from school in the former Yugoslavia?

Is it difficult to understand instructors during lecturing?

Is it difficult to read test questions?

How much time do you spend on homework each day? What subjects take you the most time?

Is language ever a problem for you in understanding homework assignments?

Do you ever get help with homework? Who helps you?

What types of comments do you get back on your papers in English class?
Do teachers usually only talk a very brief time at the beginning of class, and then let you work on your own the rest of the period?

Was working with a computer ever a problem for you in the beginning?

How many good, close peer friendships do you have?

How often do you see them?

What do you do with your friends?

Interview #3 - In Serbocroatian - Dragana

Follow-up Questions to Observation Day

What contact do you have with Americans?

How much would you estimate you speak in English with Megan, and how much do you work in silence? Please give me a figure in percentages.

Who helps you the most with your English and how do they help you?

Since you speak with Megan in English about cooking in the bakery, and other things, why are you so hesitant about speaking in English with me?

What is your relationship with Megan? Do you perceive her to be your fellow employee or are you her boss? Does this affect your motivation in using English?

How often do you answer the phone during the day? Do you avoid it? Why or why not?

Interview #4 - In English - Contact Interviews

Questions for Bill, Janet, and Megan

How long have you know the family?

How did you meet (family member)?

How did your relationship develop? Who did most of the initiating?
Describe your relationship with (family member) now?

How often do you see each other?

Describe (family member's) level of English when you first met her/him.

What has changed over the time you have known him/her in regards to his/her English?

How often would you say there are breaks in your communication? What seems to be the problem?

What are his/her strategies, and your strategies in dealing with communication breakdown?

Bill - What types of language problems has Pera had specifically in dealing with his business?

How do you feel (family member) has adjusted to life in the States?

What support systems does the family have, especially (family member)?

Are there behavior patterns, other than language issues, which identify him/her as not being American?

What do you feel are her/his English needs?

What do you think the State, or the university system, could do in order to meet the family's needs for continuing study in the English language?

What could (family member) do to improve?

Is there something else you would like to say about (family member) and his/her language that you feel is important?

Are there other issues, other than English, you would like to say something about?

Megan - How much of the day do you speak in English, and how much do you work in silence?
Interview #4 - In English - Contact Interviews

Questions for Carol

How long have you known Sanja?

How did you meet her?

How often have you seen each other?

How would you describe Sanja's level of English when you first met her?

How has her level of English improved?

What problems with English does she still struggle with? (reading, writing, speaking, listening)

In your feedback to her, did you correct language errors as well as content?

How often were there breaks in communication between you and Sanja, or between Sanja and other students? What seemed to be the problem?

How do you feel she has adjusted to life in the States?

What type of support system does the school provide for Sanja and her family in regard to Sanja's education?

What specifically is available to her in regard to her ESL needs? Is there something that the school could do differently with this? Is there something the State or universities could do to assist in this?

What could Sanja, herself, do to improve?

Is there something else you would like to say that you feel is important?