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THE INVESTMENT OF MIGRANT WOMEN IN SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Migrant women, especially married migrant women, are perhaps one of the least discussed groups in the field of second language acquisition. To date, there have been limited studies on this group of learners. This is unfortunate because our inability to understand this group would restrict us from catering to their language learning needs. Because of this reason, we decided to conduct a systematic review to understand what the literature has revealed about their investment in language learning and how gender influences their decision to learn a second language. An in-depth review of 24 empirical studies published from 1995 to 2021 reveals that the new living conditions affect their self-positioning in family and society, gendered identities play a critical role in making a woman invest or not to invest in learning a second language, and gendered identities relevant to their family roles (e.g. being a mother or a wife) appear to be the most common and powerful factors in deciding their investment in learning a second language.

Keywords: migrant women, language learning, motivation, investment

INTRODUCTION

The media often portray married migrant women in a negative light. They are often depicted having difficulty both in settling in and learning the language of their new country (Ikkänen, 2019). In fact, among first-generation immigrants, migrant women tend to use their native language more than their male counterparts (Holmes, 1993). This gives rise to the popular stereotype of migrant women, who are often depicted as a group of women who flock to people of their own ethnic groups, do not speak the language of their new country, and only speak in their native language among themselves. This depiction,

however, is not only misleading but also obscuring the reality and all factors affecting their behavior.

There are countless studies on different types of language learners (e.g. high school students, university students, pre-service teachers, office workers, etc.), but studies on married migrant women are limited in number. Perhaps, married migrant women are the most understudied group of language learners. Studies on immigrants and language proficiency would often draw from survey or census data and group them in a single entity, failing to provide insights on the dynamics between gender, relationship, and roles played by married migrant women in their attempt to learn the language of their new country. This is unfortunate because studies indicate that language acquisition may be gendered (Liversage, 2009). Thus, taking out gender from the equation and overlooking its dynamics with other factors like relationship and familial role would only provide us with an incomplete understanding of married migrant women as a distinct group of language learners.

Understanding married migrant women and their effort in learning the language of their new country is important for at least two reasons. First, it may help the integration of immigrants into their new country. Speaking the language of the new country is among the indicators of successful integration (Iikkanen, 2019). That is why major immigrant destinations often provide language courses to incoming immigrants. For example, the city of Ontario, Canada, spends more than \$390 million per year to provide language training for incoming adult immigrants (Beiser & Hou, 2000). Despite this, migrant women often have fewer opportunities to learn the language of their new countries than their male counterparts (Beiser & Hou, 2000). Even if they do, many of them would drop the course (Kouritzin, 2000). Therefore, understanding factors affecting their investment in learning the language of their new country would provide us with the information necessary to design a program or policy that would potentially improve enrollment in and completion of language courses, which eventually facilitates integration.

Second, in the long run, it may eventually help with the economy. Language mastery or fluency is an important asset with which people can improve their chance at securing employment and earning a better income (Beiser & Hou, 2000). In fact, the more migrant women learn the language of their new country, the more opportunities they have to enter the job market (Liversage, 2009). Unfortunately, married migrant women have limited access to government-funded language courses. If we can understand what causes this problem, we might be able to identify possible solutions. This, in turn, would help to improve the chance for married migrant women to join the course, master the language, and eventually increase the likelihood for them to obtain employment and contribute to the economy of their new society. In other ways, the new culture of learning language defines access to study language (Nupus , 2021).

Given such potential benefits, we are interested in examining how gender influences the investment of married migrant women in learning a second language. We set to investigate three points from previous studies in the literature: how married migrant women position themselves in their new home country; how the gendered identities of married migrant women influence their investment in language learning; and how the gendered identities of married migrant women motivate or demotivate them in learning a second language.

METHOD

We conducted three electronic searches to look for studies on migrant women and their investment in language learning. The first search was carried out through 3 EBSCO databases: Education Research Complete, Humanities International Complete, SocINDEX. This search resulted in 62 studies. The second search was done on ERIC (Education Resources Information Center), which resulted in 10 studies. The final search was done on Google Scholar, which resulted in 292 studies. It is important to note that, even though in total the number of studies found was 364, many of the search results from those three

different sources overlapped with each other. For the searches over these three platforms, we used ‘migrant women’, ‘female immigrants’, and ‘language learning’ as the keywords.

For the next step, we did a quick review of the abstracts of those studies to decide whether or not they should be included in our review. When necessary, we also read other sections of the articles, such as methodology, discussion, etc. To decide which article should be included in our in-depth review, we used the following criteria:

1. The study should be an empirical study (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods).
2. The study should be published in a peer-reviewed scholarly journal.
3. The study must employ migrant women as some (if not all) of its participants. Also, at least some of the participants were married and/or had childcare responsibilities.
4. The study must investigate at least one of the following areas: (a) motivation, (b) investment, (c) (gendered) identities.

All studies that met these criteria were included in our in-depth review. The majority of the studies identified from the searches did not meet the criteria and were found to be irrelevant, so they were not included to our review list. However, we still read some of them that contain potential insights (e.g. studies that use secondary data, such as literature reviews or quantitative analysis of census data). This careful selection resulted in 24 studies for detailed review, as shown in Table 1.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Quantitative Overview of the Studies on Migrant Women

From the 24 studies reviewed, we found that half of them were concerned about migrant women in the USA. Five studies were conducted in Canada, two studies were about migrant women in Australia, and the remaining five studies were about migrant women in the UK, Finland, Denmark, Turkey, and Tunisia. The large number of studies

conducted in the USA and Canada was not a surprise to us, because both countries have been the major destinations for immigrants and refugees for decades.

Table 1. Studies Included in the Systematic Review

No	Author(s) & Year	Number of Participants	Research Design
1	Alzouebi et al. (2020)	10	Mixed-method
2	Brown (2012)	1	Qualitative
3	Butcher and Townsend (2011)	4	Qualitative
4	Duff et al. (2000)	20	Qualitative
5	Gordon (2004)	2	Qualitative
6	Hewagodage and O'Neill (2010)	5	Qualitative
7	Iikkanen (2019)	2	Qualitative
8	Kilbride and Ali (2010)	30	Qualitative
9	Kouritzin (2000)	19	Qualitative
10	Lee (2010)	2	Qualitative
11	Liversage (2009)	22	Qualitative
12	Martin and Daiute (2013)	15	Qualitative
13	Menard-Warwick (2004)	8	Qualitative
14	Park (2009)	5	Qualitative
15	Pavlenko (2011)	30 ^a	Qualitative
16	Peirce (1995)	5	Qualitative
17	Rida and Milton (2001)	23	Qualitative
18	Rottmann and Nimer (2021)	162	Qualitative
19	Sadeghi (2008)	6	Qualitative
20	Skilton-Sylvester (2002)	4	Qualitative
21	Song (2012)	2 ^b	Qualitative
22	Walters (1996)	12 ^c	Qualitative
23	Warriner (2004)	3	Qualitative
24	Wong et al. (2009)	9	Qualitative

Note. ^aPavlenko's (2011) study used autobiographies from 25 individuals and 5 interviews. ^bThe study conducted by Song (2012) involved two immigrant families from Korea. However, it was unclear how many people were in each family. ^cThe study employed 12 couples of Tunisian men and Anglophone women who lived in Tunisia.

Based on the table 1, in terms of their publication year, 10 studies were published from 1995 to 2014, 12 studies were published from 2005 to 2014, and 2 studies were

published from 2015 and 2021. What is more interesting is almost all studies we found were qualitative studies. We suspect that researchers studying migrant women preferred the qualitative design because it can capture the rich narratives of migrant women to understand the complexity of their life.

How Married Migrant Women Position Themselves in Their New Country

Living in a new place that is geographically and culturally different from their place of origin, married migrant women mostly experience some changes in their viewpoints, which usually influences the dynamics of the relationship in their family. For example, they realize that they cannot just stay at home and take care of housework as their husbands might ask them to do in their country of origin. When they come to a new country, many of them face financial difficulties and realize that they have to contribute to supporting the family. This is reflected in the case of immigrants from Laos and Cuba (Gordon, 2004; Butcher & Townsend, 2011). Gordon (2004), for example, noted that Laotian women were able to position themselves better in their family due to their significant contribution to supporting their family with the income they earned from their job. Laotian men, on the other hand, viewed this as a sign of losing authority, leaving them with no choice but to share the housework (e.g. cooking, cleaning) that they had never done in Laos. Being in the place of better gender equality assurance, Laotian women were also able to openly express their disagreement with common Lao cultural practices like polygamy. In Gordon's (2004) study, one participant even mentioned that if her husband dated another woman or took a second wife, she would do the same and would not be afraid of divorcing him, displaying confidence and a strong sense of independence. Laotian women became more aware of their rights. They knew that their husbands could never treat them violently and they would never hesitate to call the police if their husbands wanted to hurt them.

Cuban women also had similarly positive experiences. Butcher and Townsend (2011) revealed that Marina, one of the participants in their study, taught Federico, her husband, to

prepare his own dinner. Marina would always do the housework when they were in Cuba, but her husband started to cook his own meal when they moved to Miami. Like Laotian women, Cuban women were also working or looking for a job to support their families.

Similar to these communities, Lee (2010) found that the *kirogis* (a term to describe Korean women who migrate to English-speaking country for the sake of their children's education, leaving their husband in Korea working to support their life abroad) felt somewhat liberated in the culture of their new country. Even though they were not having financial difficulties like the Laotian and Cuban immigrants, these *kirogis* still experienced positive changes in their self-positioning. One of the participants in Lee's (2010) study mentioned that she became more open and assertive. She managed to resolve a case of cultural misunderstanding that her children had at school. The mother advocated for her child and maintained intensive communication with the school and teachers, one thing she would not bother doing in Korea. Another *kirogi* in the study also viewed herself differently, viewing her "small eyes as unique" (Lee, 2010). This is not something that she could do in Korea, where people would judge one's appearance quite harshly. In terms of family relationships, migrating to western countries released these *kirogis* from the tension from their in-laws, a common thing that women might experience in Korea.

These various examples show a striking difference between the way these women had positioned themselves in their country of origin and the way they positioned themselves in their new settlement. Married migrant women, in general, gained a large portion of authority in the family. They also became aware of issues like gender equality and independence.

Perhaps the only exception is the case of Anglophone women who migrated to Tunisia following their husbands (Walters, 1996). In this case, the couples were well-educated individuals who met each other while studying for a degree in the USA. The fact that these women were native speakers of English, which could be viewed as economic and linguistic capital, made the case entirely different. Most of these Anglophone women lived in the capital city and had good-paying jobs. Many of them even had servants in their

houses. Authority was not an issue in their case perhaps because they were well-educated and were financially secure. What is interesting to note from their cases is that they complied with the local culture, which one might find somewhat gender-segregating. After a big family dinner, for example, the men would sit and talk about their interests, while the women would go wash the dishes. However, none of the participants mentioned any objection to this, which might be because they received some help from their in-laws. Besides, they always had their servants that would do the job for them.

In short, it seems that all married migrant women experienced some changes in their self-positioning when they moved to a new country. Those who moved from a less developed to a more developed country tend to feel better about themselves as they could contribute more to their family well-being, free themselves from the social norms and prejudices in their home country, and demand equal treatment from their spouses. Those who migrated to the opposite direction also experienced changes in their self-positioning but not as significant as in the previous case because they had already possessed certain economic capital.

How the Gendered Identities of Married Migrant Women Influence Their Investment in Language Learning

Moving to and settling down in a new place that is culturally different from one's homeland is challenging. This becomes even more demanding if one is migrating along with his or her family. In their new settlement, migrant women have to deal with practical issues like accommodations, health insurance, employment, and the more abstract ones like identities. Such an overburden forces married migrant women to think carefully before investing their time, effort, and money in learning the official language of their new country. In the case of the Laotian and Cuban immigrants (Gordon, 2004; Butcher & Townsend, 2011), financial difficulties forced them to look for a job because they could not just stay at home relying on their spouses as the main source of income. To do so, they had to be able to communicate in the language of their new country and, therefore, most of

them invested in studying a second language. Similarly, Warriner (2004) found that Sudanese women who migrated to the USA also expressed a need in getting employed to support their families. They realized that they could get a job if they spoke English, motivating them to take ESL courses and even considering studying in a community college. All the migrant women in these studies agreed that English was the key for them to get a job and assimilate into the local community. Their changing self-positioning from passive housewives to more active homemakers facilitated them to invest in learning the second language.

The *kirogis* (Lee, 2010), however, were in a different situation. Since they came from the upper-middle class and were well-educated, language learning was not on their priority list. Their only concern was the education of their children. However, they still went to a local community college to take ESL or vocational courses. They did it only to maintain their visa status so they could still live in the country with their children. This means that their gendered identity as a mother and its traditional attribute of caring for children influenced their decision to invest their money and time in learning English.

Interestingly, even though they seemed to be liberated in their new settlement, the *kirogis'* other identities e.g. (as Koreans, mothers, or wives) still influenced their decision making. Song (2012) examined two South Korean transnational families. Both families wanted their children to use only Korean at home so they could become bilingual with Korean being more emphasized. It seemed that, for one family, one of the motives of the mother to do so was because she did not want to position herself as a *kirogi*, who suffered from harsh criticism in Korea. Koreans considered the *kirogis* “selfish escapees from the patriarchy of Korean society” (Song, 2012), paying excessive attention to their children’s education while neglecting their duties to their husband and/or extended family. By forcing her son to develop his Korean proficiency while they were in the USA, she wanted to prove her morality and respect for traditional values.

In another study, Park (2009) discussed the investment in language learning of a Korean woman. She was not labeled a *kirogi* as she came to the USA with her husband,

but her story also displayed the impact of gendered identities on her investment in learning a second language. She studied English in an intensive English class in England. However, her feeling of linguistic marginalization prevented her from participating actively in class (i.e. she might be motivated but did not invest in learning English). Then she turned to Turkish when her father suggested that it would guarantee her professional success as not many people speak Turkish in Korea. Yet, her mother told her that a woman did not have to work to feel happy, and being a housewife of a high-status man was good enough for a woman. As a result, she left Turkey, gave up her PhD studies in the Turkish language, and followed her husband to the USA. In short, despite being educationally, economically, linguistically, and culturally privileged, “her gendered position in both her family and community compromised her position of power and limited her ability to realize her imagined identity” (Park, 2009). In other words, her identities as a daughter, a wife, and a mother influenced her decision to discontinue her investment in learning another language and give up her professional aspirations.

Like the *kirogis*, the Anglophone women in Tunisia (Walters, 1996) did not invest much in learning the language of their new country. Tunisia is a multi-dialectal and bilingual country at the same time. There are many variations of Arabic spoken in the country, with the most widely used being Tunisian Arabic (TA). Since the country was a colony of France, French also holds an important position in the community. These Anglophone women, who were mostly well-educated, spoke some French with which they could get by. Some of them learned Arabic, but their husbands were simply not good speaking partners, discouraging them to continue learning. In this case, the fact that they were unable to communicate in TA did not affect them performing their identities as wives and mothers. Therefore, not much investment was made into learning TA.

Menard-Warwick (2004) described the case of two Latina immigrants, Camila and Trini, in the USA. They spent years living in the USA with a very limited amount of English, making them unable to get a job that requires a more proficient level of English. Camila did not want to learn English because it might affect her priorities (her husband’s

dream of owning a house and her children's education). After living in the USA for 6 years, she realized that she needed English to protect her children from social evils, so she started to learn English at home by watching English-speaking TV channels. More than 10 years after coming to the USA, when her husband could finally fulfill his dream, Camila eventually started to go to English class. In Trini's case, she was satisfied with the English she picked up at her workplace until she realized that she needed more to teach her children. Camila and Trini came to class only during the daytime, when their children were at school and they were free from looking after them.

Skilton-Sylvester (2002) investigated the case of four Cambodian women (Lang, Ming, Sundra, and Soka), who participated in two urban adult ESL programs in Philadelphia, the USA. Their decision for going to English class mainly depended on their four identities as wives, mothers, daughters, and workers. For Lang, she participated in the ESL class because she wanted to improve her English to support her family's business. In other words, her identities as a daughter and a worker encouraged her to learn a second language. However, her marriage might end her effort because she positioned her new identity as a wife higher than her other identities, even though her husband did not oppose her studying English. In other words, it was her new self-positioning that stopped her from coming to class.

For Ming, her husband could not accept the fact that her social interaction in the language class was expanding and decided that she should work for a lower-paid job that did not require English, forcing her to stop going to English class. Thus, for her, being a wife was a barrier to learning English.

Sundra and Soka shared a similarity in the way they saw their children as the main reason to learn or not to learn English. For example, Sundra came to class only when she could separate her identity as a student from those of a wife and mother, i.e. during the daytime when her husband was working and her children were at school. She would stop coming to class when it affected her ability to perform her identity as a mother (e.g., when her child was sick). In short, Sundra's identity as a mother worked as both a facilitator and

a barrier to her investment in learning a language. Therefore, for Sundra, her identity as a learner was placed behind her other identities as a mother and a wife. On the other hand, Soka invested in learning English (by coming to class and self-studying) and made quick progress because there had been an agreement in her family that she should focus on learning English. She received support from her husband as they needed someone who would help their children study and communicate with schools or administrative agencies. Thus, her identity as a learner complemented those as a wife and a mother.

To conclude, “language learning stories are in themselves gendered performances” (Pavlenko, 2011). Either with or without changes in their self-positioning, married migrant women always find that their gendered identities significantly influence their decision to invest—or not to invest—in language learning. Among the different gender-defined attributes of this target group, those contributing to their identities as wives and mothers seem to be the most influential.

How the Gendered Identities of Married Migrant Women Motivate or Demotivate Them in Learning a Second Language

Motivating Aspects

Married migrant women tend to invest in learning a second language when it matches with their other investments, especially those in their families. The studies discussed previously showed that these women studied a new language when it helped them better perform their assigned identities as wives and mothers. Even in the case of the Anglophone women (Walters, 1996), whose native language possessed more capital than that used in their new country, they still made some effort—though not determined—to learn TA. They learned the language even though they did not receive much help from their husbands. Perhaps they did it because of its usefulness in a family meeting and gathering. Walters (1996) mentioned that although this reason did not seem to be very strong to keep one learning a language, in the case of Anglophone women in Tunisia, it

was quite the opposite. He described that, in Tunisia, the relationship between a woman and her in-laws was usually very close. The Anglophone women, living far away from their parents and siblings in their country of origin, took their in-laws as important as their immediate family. They often spent time together with their in-laws on various occasions and the in-laws sometimes lived with them, helping them take care of their children. From this, we saw that there was a match between these Anglophone women's investments in language learning and their familial roles. They also received great support from their family members, which encouraged them to further invest in learning TA.

Brown (2012) examined the case of married migrant women who—due to no or limited access to formal English instructions or limited access to alternative resources for studying the language—benefited from their immediate family members, especially their children who were born in the new country. In his study, Brown (2012) found that Maria, a Spanish-speaking and single mother of Mexican origin, was concerned about her child's education. She wanted to be involved in deciding her daughter's education. She felt it was important for her to understand the explanation from the admission officer of her daughter's prospective universities. She did not want to receive that information from a brochure written in Spanish. She was helped by her teenage daughter, who not only played the role of an interpreter but also became a motivator that constantly helped shape Maria's identity as a confident language learner. For example, when they went to a fast-food restaurant and Maria asked her daughter to order the food for her, the daughter refused and insisted Maria order the food herself, reminding Maria that she needed to practice her English.

The motivating aspect was also evident when these women's self-positioning aligned themselves with the culture of the new country. As mentioned previously, language is seen as a key to empowerment and self-liberation. Therefore, for married migrant women who were inspired by the freedom they enjoyed in the new country, learning the new country's language was the best way to take advantage of this newly accessible freedom. An example to illustrate this point is a finding from the study conducted by Martin and Daiute

(2013). In their study, which involved migrant women from Latin America, the majority of the participants considered learning English as a means for achieving their goals and, therefore, saw it as an empowering instrument. They regarded English as a key for them to integrate into their new community and also as a “tool of reaching independence from unequal gender roles within one’s own communities” (Martin & Daiute, 2013). Thus, similar to the case of Laotian women (Gordon, 2004), these Latin American women also showed a strong preference to align themselves with the culture of their new settlement that allowed them to place themselves in a better position. On this phenomenon, Martin and Daiute (2013) further commented that by embracing the gender equality values of their new country, married migrant women were actively seeking after objectives that were often considered impossible (e.g. the right to have access to education, the right to have financial independence, etc.) in their country of origin.

Demotivating Aspects

The motivating aspects could become demotivating when these women’s investments are mismatched with their other investments, or when they did not want to align themselves with the culture of the new settlement. Rockhill (1987) pointed out that “women are more likely to develop their English literacy skills once they are separated or divorced”, emphasizing how traditionally assigned gendered identities of women as caregivers and homemakers could prevent them from learning a language, as shown in many studies (Butcher & Townsend, 2011; Hewagodage & O’Neill, 2010; Kilbride & Ali, 2010; Kouritzin, 2000; Liversage, 2009; Menard-Warwick, 2004; Rida & Milton, 2001; Rockhill, 1987; Rottmann & Nimer, 2021; Skilton-Sylvester, 2002).

In many cases, married migrant women voluntarily decided not to go to class to better fulfill their roles at home or other family members prevented them from learning a language, limiting the women to their traditional domestic roles. One example of this can be found in a study conducted by Kilbride and Ali (2010). They found that, among other immigrant women in Canada, the Punjabi and Urdu-speaking women were the largest

groups that had this issue. For various reasons, their family or spouses disagreed with their decision to take English classes and prohibited them from doing so.

Wong et al. (2009) provided another angle to look at this issue. Because of their traditionally assigned identities, men had more advantages to prove themselves at work, thus they had better jobs and had more reasons to study English. In the study, of all nine participants, only Alberto—the only male participant in the study—eventually managed to secure a permanent position. Alberto requested his wife to waive him from doing his share of housework, so he could focus more on his job. With a better focus on his work, Alberto managed to build impressive records, eventually receiving an offer for a permanent position at the hospital where he worked. His case, however, was different from the case of eight female participants in the study. Some of the women were concerned about the unstable pay for working on-calls or simply unable to accept the calls because they had to take care of their children. Karen, one of the participants, stated that her irregular working hours left her with very little time to be with her family. This may indicate that some married migrant women, regardless of how much they have changed and aligned themselves with the culture of their new community, still put their family on the top of their priority list even though this means putting their career aspirations on the line.

The second demotivating aspect that we identified from our systematic review is the intention of married migrant women to not align themselves with the culture of their new country. In other words, it might be the wish of promoting their native language and culture that pushed them away from learning a new language. In addition to the examples of Korean mothers who wanted their children to learn the Korean language and culture (Park, 2009; Song, 2012), Kouritzin (2000) presented another relevant story. She found that married migrant women sometimes also held mixed feelings complicating their decision in learning a second language. In her study, issues like preserving culture also came into play. Kouritzin further explained:

“They [married migrant women] saw that the means to accomplish this [maintaining the mother culture] was through their L1s, because it is

impossible to socialize children into one culture through the language of another”.

Thus, these immigrant women may be fully aware of the necessity of being able to speak the language of their new country, but they may also choose to prioritize preserving their culture.

Finally, the lack of access, which is beyond the control of these migrant women, is another factor demotivating them from learning the language of their new country. Although generally these married migrant women were motivated to learn a second language, they had to discontinue their learning because of a lack of access to the language (e.g. the lack of accessible English classes, the lack of opportunities for practicing through natural exposure to English outside the classroom, the lack of opportunities to apply their language acquisition in real life, either at work, at home, or in the neighborhood). Butcher and Townsend (2011) found that of the four Cuban women who participated in their study, only one eventually completed the foundation ESL course and continued to the next level. One of the reasons for the other three to stop coming to class was transportation difficulty, i.e. on some days there was no bus and they could not afford a car. Similarly, Kilbride and Ali (2010) also discovered that most married migrant women in Canada considered transportation as one of the major barriers that prevented them from coming to language classes. They often found that the course center was far away from their home, making it difficult for them to get there. Most of them did not have cars and were also not familiar with the public transportation system.

In some other cases, their access also became limited due to the regulation regarding their visa status. Since most of them came with a dependent visa, stating that their husband would be their sponsor, they were not eligible for the government-funded ESL courses. This means that they had to pay tuition if they wanted to take the courses. This was a difficult option because most of them struggled financially.

The lack of access was also the reason why Laotian women had to rely on domestic language events—which offered interactions with social institutions like children’s daycare or administrative agencies—to learn English (Gordon, 2004).

Even if married migrant women had access to employment, their workplace did not give many opportunities for them to practice their English. Laotian women, for example, were not able to pick up much English from their workplace since most of the workers were either fellow Southeast Asians or Latino Americans (Gordon, 2004). Instead of being exposed to English, some managed to learn a little Spanish from their workplace. A similar situation could also be seen in the case of the Sudanese. The Sudanese women, who were quite successful in their English course (i.e. completed different levels of ESL courses), did not have many opportunities to use their English in daily communication, leaving them still disadvantaged to improve themselves. Wong et al. (2009) noted that all participants in their study felt that the ESL courses empowered them for being able to understand and speak the language they needed to secure employment. However, although they could communicate using the language, they did not have many opportunities to use the language in their daily life. Some studies in this review also show that adult immigrant learners’ primary opportunity to use English was in the classroom, and they did not have much natural exposure to English, which discouraged them to invest more in learning the language. To conclude, Warriner (2004) commented on this matter as follows:

“waiting lists for English as a second language (ESL) classes, a poor labor market, anti-immigration sentiments, racism, a lack of affordable child care, and difficulties with transportation represent a few of the structural factors that challenge the efforts of new immigrants to establish self-sufficiency”.

In general, there were motivating and demotivating factors that influence married migrant women to learn a second language. Motivating factors come to play when their investment in second language learning matched with their other investments, especially

those in family, and when their self-positioning aligned themselves with the culture of the new country. Demotivating factors rise when the opposites happen, i.e. their investment in second language learning did not match with their other investments and when they did not align with the target culture. The lack of access poses another factor demotivating married migrant women from investing in learning a second language. Altogether, these findings have further proved that married immigrant women have many obstacles preventing them to learn a second language.

CONCLUSIONS

In this article, we discussed the investment of married migrant women in second language learning and the impacts of gender as a social construct on their decision of such investment. The reason why we looked at investment is that in many cases migrant women are motivated to learn a second language. They know that language is a key factor to help them survive and thrive in their new settlement. However, their gender and identities are often in the way, preventing them from accessing language courses and throwing their high motivation out of the window. Thus, even though motivation is important, it is not sufficient to explain their behaviors, their learning practices, as well as all the decisions they made. Only investment, which takes into account numerous factors (e.g. identity, culture, ethnicity, age, socioeconomic class, marriage status, etc.) could do this task. The general findings found from the studies in the literature were the new living condition affect married migrant women' self-positioning in their family and society, gendered identities play a critical role in making a woman invest, or not to invest, in learning a second language, and those gendered identities relevant to their family roles, such as those as mothers and wives, appeared to be the most common and powerful factors deciding their investment.

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