

**Exploring sociopolitical dimensions of heritage language maintenance: The case of  
Vietnamese speakers in Montréal**

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Le, T.-N. N., & Trofimovich, P. (2023, in press). Exploring sociopolitical dimensions of heritage language maintenance: The case of Vietnamese speakers in Montréal. *Canadian Modern Language Review*.

## **Abstract**

Research on heritage language (HL) development often focuses on immigrants' identity and social network as predictors of HL maintenance. However, an important and overlooked factor is the sociopolitical circumstances that trigger emigration, such as whether immigrants relocate due to economic hardship or political turmoil. This study examines if the pattern of HL maintenance and its association with immigrants' ethnolinguistic identity and social engagement differ for families of political versus economic immigrants. Participants included 38 parent-child pairs from Montréal's Vietnamese diaspora. The parents identified their reason for immigration and completed an ethnolinguistic questionnaire, their children provided a HL communication profile, and all participated in interviews. To determine participants' Vietnamese speaking skills, short interview excerpts were rated for accentedness, comprehensibility, fluency, and global knowledge. Participants were generally successful at maintaining their HL, but there was a decline in the children's Vietnamese, especially for the economic immigrants. Several ethnolinguistic variables (desire to preserve a HL, pride in heritage culture) and social network properties (network size, intimacy, communication-related stress) appeared to contribute to HL maintenance. However, these relationships were different (and sometimes opposite) in the groups of political versus economic immigrants, suggesting that HL development and maintenance are subject to various contextual influences.

## **Keywords**

heritage language; maintenance; reasons for emigration; sociopolitical conflict; language identity; social network analysis; Vietnamese; immigrants

## **Exploring sociopolitical dimensions of heritage language maintenance: The case of Vietnamese speakers in Montréal**

Faced with pressures to integrate into the culture of a host society, immigrants often find it challenging to preserve their heritage languages (Fishman, 1991). In Canada, a heritage language (HL) refers to a language spoken by immigrants and their children (Montrul, 2009), which is neither the country's official language (French or English) nor an ancestral language spoken by one or more of First Nations (McIvor, 2020). Canada has officially recognized HLs not just as a valuable resource for individuals but also as a benefit for the entire nation.

According to the Action Plan for Official Languages, between 2018 and 2023, Canada is investing \$149 million yearly to support HL education with a focus on creating schools and facilitating the dissemination of knowledge, methods, and tools for HL educators (Government of Canada, 2021). For instance, Manitoba and Alberta have incorporated several HLs, including Arabic, Mandarin, German, Hebrew, Spanish, and Ukrainian, into each province's education curricula (Cummins, 2014).

However, other less-commonly-taught languages, such as Vietnamese and Korean, have not been as fortunate, with second- and third-generation speakers often feeling forced to study them just because they are spoken by their parents and grandparents (Lee, 2002; Maloof et al., 2006). The success of HL learning is frequently predicated on speakers' sense of agency, often expressed through their desire to be associated with their ethnolinguistic group (He, 2010; Park & Sarkar, 2007), and unsuccessful HL learning may be the result of speakers (particularly from smaller or underrepresented groups) struggling to define their ethnolinguistic identity in relation to their home language and those of the broader society. Therefore, to understand the learning of HLs and ultimately to protect the cultures they represent, it is important to attend to the

sociocultural complexity of HL development. To address this overall objective, in this study, we focus on the Vietnamese community in Montréal (Québec), examining two sociocultural factors (first generation's ethnolinguistic identity and second generation's social engagement) in relation to HL maintenance in the second generation, as a function of a previously underexplored variable—a family's reason for emigration (predominantly political vs. economic).

## **Background literature**

### *HL maintenance*

HL maintenance, which is the focus of our study, can be broadly understood as various efforts by individuals and communities to preserve their familial or home language in various modalities, such as listening and writing, and through various literacy and oracy practices, such as reading and speaking, within and across generations of language users (Montrul, 2009). HL use in a given community inside and outside the home is particularly crucial for HL maintenance, especially where there are outside pressures on speakers to integrate into the culture of the host society and to adopt its language (Tran et al., 2022). For instance, Hakuta and D'Andrea (1992) found that HL maintenance of Mexican immigrants in the United States was primarily driven through their interactive exposure experiences with adults in the home (e.g., grandparents, parents). Research on other HLs, such as Korean (Lee, 2002) and Vietnamese (Maloof et al., 2006), similarly showed that the home language environment trumped other means of HL maintenance, including formal schooling. Polinsky and Kagan (2007, p. 16) described a spectrum of language proficiency for HL speakers—from natively like to low (i.e., describing those “who grew up with limited or early interrupted exposure to the home language”). Because family plays a major role in HL maintenance, a speaker's language skills could be seen as an indicator of a given family's success. Thus, it is of key importance to explore

various aspects of HL speakers' home environment, including first generation's view of their ethnolinguistic identity and second generation's social engagement with their HL, as these (and other) variables can shape an environment conducive to HL maintenance.

*Ethnolinguistic identity and HL maintenance*

For some immigrant groups, language is an inextricable part of their culture (Guo, 2013), where a HL is considered a salient part of ethnocultural self-identification (He, 2010; Lee, 2002). For instance, in a study of 40 second-generation Korean American university students, students with a higher level of Korean proficiency demonstrated greater self-concept, stronger self-esteem and confidence, as well as better psychological health in terms of adjusting to the American society than students with lower Korean proficiency (Lee, 2002). Moreover, at least for some groups, losing a HL might be tantamount to losing their culture. Focusing on the Indo-Canadian community in Montréal, Kumar et al. (2008) showed that second-generation speakers of Hindi shifted in their language use from Hindi to English. By using more English, these speakers were losing some aspects of their heritage culture while becoming increasingly Canadian in the expression of their identity. Thus, for some communities, a shift in HL use can lead to a change in culture, potentially threatening their existence as a group.

The potential of losing vital aspects of their culture might compel some immigrant parents to encourage or even pressure their children to preserve and maintain their HL as a way of protecting the community's existence. For example, for Korean Canadian parents, maintaining their HL was associated with helping children create a positive identity in the new country, strengthening the Korean community, and contributing to children's academic and professional success by being bilingual (Park & Sarkar, 2007). In a study of Eastern European immigrants to Canada, nearly all parents agreed that it was vital for them to pass on their HL as a means of

transmitting their culture and traditions and reinforcing children's ethnic identity (Nesteruk, 2010). It appears, then, that immigrants' willingness to pass on their HL stems from their pride in being members of their respective communities which often view their language as "a pillar of ethnolinguistic identity" (Sachdev & Bourhis, 2005, p. 66).

However, not all immigrants are eager to pass on their language, especially if they believe that their culture can be preserved through other means. For instance, Sri Lankan parents in Australia prioritize national pride and religion over language, emphasizing the sense of nationalism toward Sri Lanka and the practice of Hinduism or Buddhism in their communication with children, with the consequence that HL skills in the second generation emerge as a by-product of learning about the country and its religions (Perera, 2015). From this perspective, then, the likelihood of a HL being passed on to the next generation depends on how strongly immigrants consider language to be central to their identity (Hoffman, 1991). For example, for Chinese speakers in Québec, language might be central to their identity because speaking Chinese signals group loyalty (Gatbonton et al., 2005), so Chinese parents would be likely to promote HL maintenance. In contrast, Korean parents in Québec often empathize with their children's burden of learning both French and English simultaneously and avoid putting additional pressure on them to learn Korean (Park & Sarkar, 2007). These observations align with Crawford's (1992) statistics of HL maintenance in the United States, where the incidence of a language shift toward English in the second generation is relatively low in the Chinese community (26%) whereas it is higher in the Korean (69%) and Japanese (79%) communities. In sum, the likelihood of passing down a HL depends on how strongly immigrants consider it to be of core cultural value, compared to other means of expressing identity.

### *Social engagement and HL maintenance*

In addition to parents' ethnolinguistic identity, HL maintenance is determined by quantity and quality of children's HL social contact, for example, in terms of its size, density, proximity, and range (Mitchell, 1969). The early work of Milroy (1987) hypothesized that speakers with more ethnic ties would maintain their language better because they come across more opportunities to use it, ensuring its successful maintenance. In support of this claim, studies on Chinese speakers in the United Kingdom and Croatian speakers in Italy have shown that those who were embedded in more extensive HL networks reported greater HL maintenance (Kosic, 2014; Li, 1994). In essence, a person's network size and interconnectedness often predict that person's HL skills. However, in a study of the Filipino community in Norway, Lanza and Svendsen (2007) clarified that HL speakers' language choices are not solely governed by the size of their networks, but also by person- and context-specific factors, such as a conversation's participants, situation, theme, and purpose. Thus, besides a network's size or density, there are other elements of social engagement to consider in predicting HL maintenance.

One aspect of social engagement that can impact HL maintenance is communication-related stress, which refers to speakers' emotional reaction when they face communication difficulties using their HL (Doucerain et al., 2015). In Lanza and Svendsen's (2007) study, the children who actively determined which language to speak and with whom might have experienced communication-related stress. Instead of using their HL, they opted to speak Norwegian (majority language) to communicate with their parents, likely as a way of negotiating a more favourable identity of a fluent speaker (Bourdieu, 1991) and avoiding feeling frustrated and eventually inferior to their parents. Therefore, communication-related stress, which might be caused by speakers feeling unsupported in their community, could hinder their desire to use the

language and ultimately making it less likely to be passed on to the next generation. For instance, second-generation Korean speakers in Lee's (2002) study wished to have a more socially accepting, supportive environment, because they believed it reduced their stress when speaking their HL. Existing research, thus, points to a speaker's stress level as a contributor to HL maintenance, in addition to traditional network measures, such as size and density.

*Reason for emigration a mediating variable?*

HL speakers, and especially immigrants, often experience various sociopolitical challenges, such as immigration and settlement, discrimination, and separation from extended family, which affect them as individuals and a community (Montrul, 2009). Therefore, HL maintenance for speakers from a specific ethnolinguistic group is likely also influenced by the group's sociopolitical history. Smolicz et al.'s (2001) work with the Greek, Latvian, Italian, and Chinese communities in Australia highlights how the sociopolitical pressures in the homeland may have provided a stronger impetus for the ethnic Latvians to maintain their HL compared to the other groups. Between the 1940 Soviet takeover of Latvia and the 1991 restoration of independence, Latvian was a minority language in Latvia, which compelled many immigrants to take on an active role of maintaining the language to prevent it from going extinct, passing it on along with the group's history and values. However, after Latvia regained its independence, Latvian was no longer in danger, which likely contributed to the decline in the fervour with which Latvian speakers approached language maintenance.

Various types of conflict and sociopolitical trauma might also impact HL maintenance through speakers' direct experience in these events. For example, in a study of German Jewish wartime refugees (Schmid, 2002), a key variable that influenced their HL loss was not how old they were when they left or how long they resided in the new country, but rather the trauma that



they had experienced as the victims of the holocaust. Even though German was the language of the homeland, it was also the language of pain and suffering, which deterred the holocaust survivors from passing it down to the next generation. As poignantly noted by an Austrian British writer Jakov Lind, whose mother tongue was German, “German gave me the creeps... [it] had nothing to do with the people who wrote and write it—as it wasn’t what they *said* but that they said it *in German*” (Steinitz, 2013, p. 38, original emphasis). Thus, languages are embedded in people’s particular historical and geopolitical experiences which might affect their perceptions and actions, including whether or not they pass on their HL.

Dramatic (and often traumatic) sociopolitical shifts, such as wars and invasions, can have a negative impact on HL maintenance even after many years (Schmid, 2002). Since the communist takeover of South Vietnam in 1975, which united Vietnam under the communist rule, about a million Southern Vietnamese fled their country and settled abroad, particularly in English-speaking countries that used to be South Vietnam’s allies during the war. They carried with them not only the war trauma of losing kin and possessions but also the postwar shock of resettlement under the new regime, which included spending time in re-education camps, a name given to prison camps focusing on repression and indoctrination (Barnes & Bennett, 2002). Above all, after moving to a new home, these first Vietnamese immigrants established themselves as members of the “imagined” nation (Anderson, 1991) of South Vietnam, which no longer existed, and passed this identity on to the next generation. In a study of second-generation refugees in the United Kingdom (Bloch & Hirsch, 2016), most of the surveyed Vietnamese youths differentiated South and North Vietnam from a young age, for instance, with one participant noting, “it’s been ingrained into me, you are Southern... you come from generations of Southern people, and Northern people were different” (p. 2451). Thus, instead of avoiding HL

use and refusing to pass it on, for example, for fear of being linked to the communist Vietnam, the South Vietnamese community abroad may instead have strengthened their ties to their language and culture, likely due to the traumatic events they experienced around emigration.

### **The present study**

For immigrant families who are (re)imagining themselves as members of an ethnolinguistic group in the dominant culture of a host community, HL maintenance appears to be shaped by various forces. While many studies have investigated HL maintenance in relation to first-generation speakers' beliefs about the role of language in shaping their identity (e.g., Park & Sarkar, 2007; Nesteruk, 2010) or second generation's engagement in HL social networks (e.g., Kopic, 2004; Lanza & Svendsen, 2007), to the best of our knowledge, there has been no research about how immigrants' ethnolinguistic identity and their social networks intersect with a sociopolitical context of emigration to determine HL maintenance. As we discussed previously, for many HL speakers, emigration is caused by particular conditions in the homeland (Perera, 2015). Therefore, it is necessary to examine reasons that push people to leave their country because these reasons can have long-term consequences for whether they will pass their HL on to their children. Put simply, without considering an individual's emigration history as a mediating factor, our understanding of HL maintenance would be incomplete.

To contribute to this goal, we examined whether HL maintenance in the second generation varies for immigrants who have different experiences with sociopolitical events surrounding their emigration, such as whether it was primarily driven by political turmoil versus economic need. Because the Canadian Vietnamese community experienced war trauma prior to immigration, this diaspora appears to be especially suited for extending prior research to explore reason for emigration (predominantly political vs. economic) as a factor in HL maintenance. In

the 1970s and 1980s, Canada welcomed approximately 120,000 refugees fleeing the Vietnam war and its aftermath, mostly from South Vietnam (Lambert, 2017). These refugees and their descendants have largely settled in metropolitan areas such as Toronto, Vancouver, and Montréal (Statistics Canada, 2023). In Montréal, where this study was carried out, the Vietnamese community consists of approximately 40,690 members, and it is located in a French–English bilingual context. Apart from this, however, the experience of Montréal’s Vietnamese diaspora does not differ from that of other Vietnamese communities, including in the United States (Maloof et al., 2006), the United Kingdom (Bloch & Hirsch, 2016), and Australia (Tran et al., 2022), in the sense that most refugees experienced similar war trauma and economic hardship that drove them to leave their homeland. Like other (South) Vietnamese communities (Bloch & Hirsch, 2016), the Montréal Vietnamese diaspora also shows similar aspirations to distinguish themselves from present-day Vietnam. For instance, the organization providing legal representation for Canadians of Vietnamese origin continues to embrace the flag of South Vietnam (Communauté Vietnamienne au Canada, région de Montréal, n.d.), and Montréal-area HL schools still largely adhere to pre-1975 teaching methods and materials, avoiding the use of textbooks from present-day Vietnam. In this sense, the Montréal Vietnamese community offers an ideal context to explore whether this community’s efforts to safeguard their HL is associated with specific events that immigrants experienced during their emigration process.

We therefore explored whether second-generation speakers of Vietnamese differ in their Vietnamese speaking ability depending on whether they come from families that emigrated for political versus economic reasons. We also examined if first generation’s ethnolinguistic identity and second generation’s HL social networks and communication-related stress are associated with different levels of Vietnamese in the second generation of speakers. Finally, we interviewed

all speakers, using their responses to interpret quantitative data patterns. On the basis of limited prior work (Bloch & Hirsch, 2016; Smolicz et al., 2001), we predicted that Vietnamese skills would be stronger in children of political than economic immigrants. We also anticipated that greater Vietnamese skills would be linked to stronger ethnolinguistic beliefs for the children's parents (He, 2010) and larger and denser social networks and less communication-related stress for the children (Doucerain et al., 2015; Kosic, 2014). We addressed two sets of questions:

1. Do second-generation Vietnamese speakers maintain their HL? Does the pattern of HL maintenance differ for families of political versus economic immigrants?
2. Is HL maintenance associated with the first generation's ethnolinguistic identity and the second generation's social network properties and their communication-related stress? Do these relationships differ for political versus economic immigrants?

## **Method**

### *Study design*

Because HL maintenance is complex phenomenon, shaped by various forces relevant to first- and second-generation speakers, our design called for several sets of materials created for different participant cohorts, as illustrated in Table 1. The study broadly followed a mixed-methods approach to data collection (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2017), where the predominantly quantitative dataset was supplemented with broad qualitative insights for data interpretation.

**Table 1** *Summary of Study Materials*

Instrument	Participants	Type	Purpose
Research questions 1			
Background questionnaire	All	Quant	To determine family reason for immigration
Short interview	All	Quant	To record a sample of extemporaneous Vietnamese speech for assessment by raters
Research questions 2			
Ethnolinguistic survey	Parents	Quant	To capture parents' sociopolitical views
Social network survey	Children	Quant	To estimate children's HL social network
RASI questionnaire	Children	Quant	To measure children's acculturative stress
Short interview	All	Qual	To elicit broad post-experiment comments on HL maintenance and use, as additional post hoc evidence for data interpretation

*Note.* RASI = Riverside Acculturation Stress Inventory; Quant = quantitative data; Qual = qualitative data.

### *Participants*

Participants included 38 Vietnamese parent–child pairs, for a total of 76 individuals, recruited through snowball sampling. The parents (first-generation participants) were Vietnamese immigrants (30 females, 8 males), all from South Vietnam, with a mean age of 59.37 years ( $SD = 6.98$ ). Born and raised in monolingual households in Vietnam and educated through primary and secondary schooling in Vietnamese, they emigrated to Canada and settled in Montréal between 1970 and 1999. These participants, who left Vietnam as teenagers or young adults, except for one who arrived at the age of eight, belonged to the first wave of Vietnamese

migration following the Fall of Saigon in 1975, so the Vietnam War was likely a significant sociopolitical event for these individuals, compared to those belonging to subsequent migration waves (Joy, 2010). At the time of the study, the first-generation participants had resided in Montréal for an average of 37.37 years ( $SD = 7.04$ ). The participating parents nominated one of their children (second-generation participants) to take part, for a total of 38 individuals (21 females, 17 males) with a mean age of 26.39 years ( $SD = 6.75$ ). Thirty-two were born in Montréal, residing there since birth, whereas six settled in the city within the first year of life (1), between the ages of two and four (4), or at the age of eight (1), with a mean length of residence of 25.86 years ( $SD = 6.61$ ). All second-generation participants received formal primary and secondary education in Québec in French (25), English (1), or both (12).

### *Materials*

The materials included four questionnaires and semi-structured interview prompts (see Table 1). First, a background questionnaire targeted participants' demographic information. Second, an ethnolinguistic questionnaire (Appendix A), adopted from Gatbonton and Trofimovich (2008), assessed various elements of ethnolinguistic identity for the first-generation participants, such as pride for their group (e.g., *I am proud to see symbols of my ethnic group displayed around me*), perceptions about Vietnam and its language (e.g., *Vietnam will never realize its potential for as long as it remains a communist country*), and willingness to preserve Vietnamese language and culture (*The Vietnamese language and culture of Vietnam have to be preserved at all costs*) through 10 statements accompanied by 9-point scales (1 = *totally disagree*, 9 = *totally agree*). This questionnaire was not administered to the second-generation participants, as the intention was to examine how the parents' beliefs are related to their children's Vietnamese.

Third, a social network survey (Appendix B) measured the size, density, intimacy, and inclusiveness of the second-generation participants' HL networks (Doucerain et al., 2015). They could nominate up to 15 members of their community with whom they typically interact in Vietnamese, rating their level of intimacy with each person on a 4-point scale (1 = *not intimate*, 4 = *very intimate*) and indicating whether the nominated people knew each other. Fourth, a short version of the Riverside Acculturation Stress Inventory (Miller et al., 2011) elicited dimensions of the second-generation participants' communication-related stress (Appendix C). Although this instrument contains 15 items assessing culture-related difficulties in different life domains, we included only the most relevant six items across the domains of intercultural stress (e.g., *I have had disagreements with Canadians/Quebeckers for liking Asian customs or ways of doing things*) and discrimination in the heritage community (e.g., *I have been treated rudely or unfairly because of my background*), all assessed through 5-point scales (1 = *disagree*, 5 = *agree*). These two surveys were not administered to the first-generation participants, as the goal was to determine the role of social networks and communication-related stress in HL maintenance for the second generation.

Finally, all participants took part in a 20-minute individual recorded interview organized around 15 scripted questions, all developed specifically for this study based on prior research (Bloch & Hirsch, 2016; Tran et al., 2022) and the first author's experience as a member of the same community (Appendix D). The purpose of the interview was to obtain a sample of the participants' speech for assessment of their Vietnamese HL skills and to elicit their opinions regarding HL maintenance. Our intention was not to amass a vast qualitative dataset; rather, we envisaged the interview as a source of additional information for post hoc analysis and interpretation of our quantitative data patterns. The first-generation participants were interviewed

in Vietnamese and were prompted to talk about their reasons for immigration and the impact of social and political changes in Vietnam on their language use, the role of language in their identity, and their social networks and engagement with the Vietnamese community. The second-generation participants were interviewed in a language of choice (English, French, or Vietnamese) to understand their patterns of language use, engagement with the Vietnamese community, and willingness to preserve the language for the next generations.

### *Procedure*

The first-generation participants were tested in individual sessions (60–90 minutes) conducted in Vietnamese in person (15), on the phone (7), or through Zoom (16), with all materials translated into Vietnamese by the researcher (first author), a professional translator. Because these participants varied in their familiarity and comfort with technology and because most preferred a friendly conversation, the researcher read each questionnaire statement aloud, and the participants provided their ratings which were then recorded. They completed the tasks in the same order, starting from the background questionnaire, followed by the ethnolinguistic questionnaire and the interview. The second-generation participants received all questionnaires electronically via LimeSurvey (<https://www.limesurvey.org>). They first completed the background questionnaire, followed by the network survey, and the communication-related stress inventory (all in English), after which they scheduled their individual Zoom interview. Because the second-generation participants may have been tempted to switch to English or French when speaking with the researcher, who is similar to them in age and would be presumed to speak both languages, the interviews were conducted by a middle-age Vietnamese research assistant (unfamiliar to participants), who was trained by the researcher and followed the interview script.



### *Speech ratings*

Brief excerpts from each participant's most fluent interview response (as judged by the researcher) were excised from the interview recordings, saved as individual audio files ( $M_{length} = 52.33$  seconds,  $SD = 10.42$ ), and normalized for perceived volume. For the first generation, the excerpts were taken from about halfway through the interview where they discussed their strategies for using Vietnamese with their children. For the second generation, the excerpts included their most fluent response to the simple prompts about their hobbies, daily activities, favourite foods, or experience with Vietnamese holidays and traditions. All excerpts were subsequently presented for evaluation to four native-speaking Vietnamese raters ( $M_{age} = 53.75$  years,  $SD = 1.09$ ). Three raters (2 female, 1 male) were born and lived in Vietnam, while one female rater had immigrated to Canada as an adult and resided in Montréal. Raters used 9-point scales to evaluate the excerpts along four dimensions: accentedness (1 = *strong accent*, 9 = *no accent*), comprehensibility (1 = *difficult to understand*, 9 = *easy to understand*), fluency (1 = *speaks slowly, with undue pausing and hesitations*, 9 = *speaks fluidly, without unnecessary pausing and hesitations*), and global knowledge (1 = *does not know the language*, 9 = *knows the language perfectly*).

Raters provided their evaluations online through LimeSurvey. Accentedness was defined as the extent to which the speaker sounded nativelike. Comprehensibility was introduced as the degree to which the speaker was easy to understand. Fluency was defined as the extent to which the speaker's speech sounded fluid, spoken without excessive pauses or hesitations. Finally, global knowledge was described as the speaker's overall command of Vietnamese. Before rating the 76 audio excerpts, which were presented randomly one at a time, with only one listening of each audio allowed, raters practiced using the scales by evaluating one unrelated recording.

Apart from general instructions and definitions of the key terms, raters did not receive any additional training or calibration practice, considering that the four listener-rated dimensions generally reflect intuitive, holistic judgements (Derwing & Munro, 2015).

### **Data analysis**

#### *Speech ratings*

The speech ratings were checked for internal consistency using two-way, consistency, average-measures intraclass correlations. The values were high for accentedness (.91), comprehensibility (.88), fluency (.86), and global knowledge (.86), so a single score was derived per participant for each rated category by averaging the ratings provided by the four raters. These rater-assessed scores served as measures of participants' Vietnamese speaking ability, allowing for between-generation comparisons.

#### *Ethnolinguistic identity*

The first-generation participants' responses to the ethnolinguistic questionnaire were checked for internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha), separately per response category, before composite measures (data permitting) were derived by averaging across individual scale items. Pride for the Vietnamese community abroad was a mean score across four items focusing on the importance of Vietnamese heritage and culture ( $\alpha = .77$ ), whereas pride for the present-day Vietnam was a mean score across two items eliciting participants' feelings about the achievements of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam ( $\alpha = .87$ ). Perceptions about Vietnam and its language were defined as a mean score across three items eliciting participants' sentiment about the role of Vietnamese in the political context of the present-day Vietnam ( $\alpha = .82$ ); these items were reverse-coded so that higher values corresponded to support for, while lower values represented rejection of, the present-day Vietnam and its language. Finally, participants'

response to a key item (*The Vietnamese language and the culture of Vietnam have to be preserved at all costs*) was retained as a single score to capture their willingness to preserve the Vietnamese language and culture (see Appendix A for items contributing to each measure).

#### *Social network*

Following Doucerain et al. (2015), four measures of the second generation's HL network were derived: (a) network size (number of Vietnamese-speaking friends nominated); (b) network intimacy (average intimacy rating across all friends nominated); (c) network inclusiveness (number of nonisolated friends divided by the total number of friends); and (d) network density (number of all links among nominated friends divided by the number of possible links).

#### *Communication-related stress*

The second generation's responses to the communication stress inventory yielded two measures. Intercultural stress ( $\alpha = .71$ ) was operationalized as a composite score across three items targeting intercultural conflict, whereas discrimination ( $\alpha = .73$ ) was defined as a composite score across three items targeting perceived discrimination in the HL community (see Appendix C for items contributing to each measure).

#### *Participant interviews*

Because the participants' interview responses served only illustrative purposes, used in post hoc analysis to support our quantitative data interpretation, interview comments were coded holistically through single-phase open coding informed by grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The first author, who coded all interviews, determined major themes (e.g., support for HL maintenance, political reason for immigration) only when each theme was directly mentioned by a participant (e.g., "But from what I know about the Vietnamese culture in Montréal, every time I hear something, there're conflicts between different groups" was coded as "conflict in the

community”), which obviated the need for second-phase interpretive coding and intercoder reliability checking.

### *Analysis plan*

Because both visual inspection (Q-Q plots) and tests of normality (Shapiro-Wilk) revealed that assumptions of normality were violated for several speech ratings and questionnaire-derived measures and because subgroups of political and economic immigrants (see below) were relatively small and uneven in size, all data analyses were carried out using nonparametric statistics. For the first research question, we computed between-group comparisons using two-sample Wilcoxon signed-rank tests (parent vs. child speakers) and Mann-Whitney U tests (political vs. economic immigrants). To address the second research question, we computed Spearman correlations (two-tailed), where correlation coefficients around .25 are considered weak, coefficients around .40 are medium in strength, and coefficients exceeding .60 indicate strong relationships (Plonsky & Oswald, 2014).

## **Results**

### *HL maintenance in the second generation*

Our first goal was to determine if second-generation Vietnamese speakers maintain their HL by comparing their and their parents’ Vietnamese speech, and to examine if the second generation’s Vietnamese speech differed for families of political versus economic immigrants. As summarized in Table 2, the median ratings and associated variability measures (interquartile ranges) for the first generation were similar across the four dimensions, all approaching the top of each scale, with little variation among the speakers. However, the second generation’s Vietnamese was rated lower, generally within each scale’s midrange. According to Wilcoxon tests (see Table 2), the ratings differed significantly between the two generations, where the

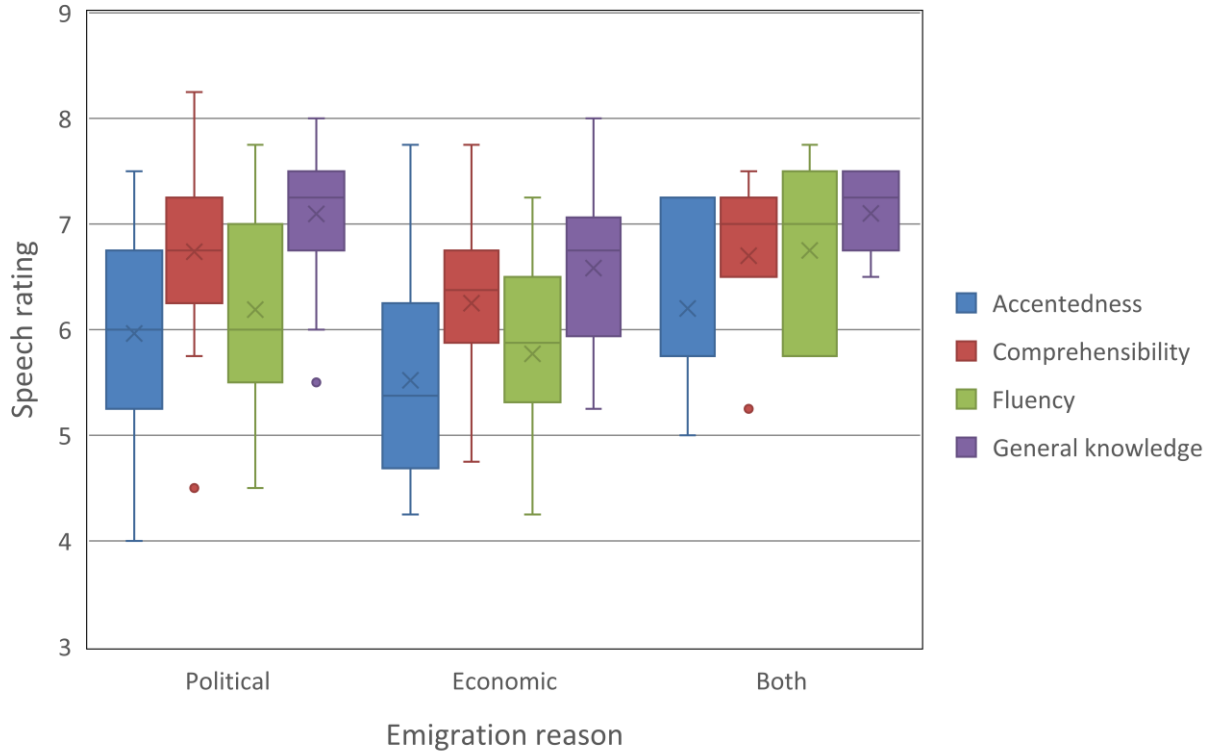
speech of the child generation was rated as more accented, less comprehensible, less fluent, and as generally indicative of less command of Vietnamese than the speech of their parents. Among the four dimensions, accentedness revealed the greatest between-generation difference.

**Table 2** *Rater-Assessed Vietnamese Measures (38 Matched Parent–Child Pairs)*

Speech rating	First generation		Second generation		Wilcoxon test	
	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>IQR</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>IQR</i>	<i>Z</i>	<i>p</i>
Accentedness	8.50	0.56	5.75	1.75	5.38	< .001
Comprehensibility	8.50	0.50	6.75	1.00	5.39	< .001
Fluency	8.50	0.75	6.00	1.50	5.38	< .001
General knowledge	8.50	0.50	7.00	0.75	5.32	< .001

*Note.* All *p* values are based on two-tailed distributions.

To examine if the second generation’s ratings differed by the stated reason of each family’s emigration, we first inspected the data visually. There were 21 second-generation speakers whose parents identified political turmoil as their main emigration reason. For 12 second-generation speakers, economic hardship was the primary reason for emigration. The parents of the remaining five speakers listed both political and economic reasons. As shown in Figure 1, the median (and mean) ratings for the second-generation speakers in the economic group were generally lower than those in the political group. The speakers whose parents listed both sets of reasons generally performed similarly to the children of political immigrants.



**Figure 1** Speech ratings of the second generation’s Vietnamese skills by family’s emigration reason (political, economic, both). Horizontal lines designate medians; crosses indicate means.

Whereas the group whose parents had emigrated for both economic and political reasons was too small for statistical analyses ( $n = 5$ ), we compared the ratings between the remaining two second-generation groups. As shown in Table 3, the ratings were always higher while the associated measures of variability were always lower in the political than economic group. According to Mann-Whitney tests, between-group differences reached statistical significance for the rating of general Vietnamese knowledge, albeit with no adjustment for multiple comparisons.

**Table 3** *Rater-Assessed Vietnamese Measures for the Second Generation by Emigration Reason*

	Political ( <i>n</i> = 21)		Economic ( <i>n</i> = 12)		Mann-Whitney test	
	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>IQR</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>IQR</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>p</i>
Speech rating						
Accentedness	6.00	1.63	5.38	1.69	1.31	0.189
Comprehensibility	6.75	1.00	6.38	1.13	1.74	0.083
Fluency	6.00	1.50	5.88	1.56	1.18	0.236
General knowledge	7.25	0.75	6.75	1.38	1.97	0.049

*Note.* All *p* values are based on two-tailed distributions.

*First generation's ethnolinguistic identity, second generation's social network and communication-related stress*

Our second goal was to determine if HL maintenance is associated with the first generation's social views and the second generation's social network properties and their communication-related stress and if these relationships differ for political versus economic immigrants. In terms of the first generation's ethnolinguistic identity, these participants showed a strong will to preserve the Vietnamese language and culture (*Mdn* = 9.00, *IQR* = 1.00, where 9 = *strongly agree*) and expressed pride in the Vietnamese community abroad (*Mdn* = 8.20, *IQR* = 1.40), but showed less pride in the present-day Socialist Republic of Vietnam (*Mdn* = 4.75, *IQR* = 3.00) and demonstrated varied perceptions about Vietnam and its language (*Mdn* = 6.33, *IQR* = 3.42). With respect to the second generation's social networks, these participants reported a sizeable Vietnamese-speaking network (*Mdn* = 7.00, *IQR* = 9.00) involving a relatively high level of intimacy (*Mdn* = 3.22, *IQR* = 0.82, where 4 = *very intimate*), inclusiveness (*Mdn* = 1.00, *IQR* = 0.00), and density (*Mdn* = 0.99, *IQR* = 0.35). In terms of their communication-related

stress, the second generation reported experiencing some intercultural stress ( $Mdn = 2.33$ ,  $IQR = 2.08$ , where 5 = *agree*) and discrimination ( $Mdn = 2.00$ ,  $IQR = 1.75$ ). In all cases (except network inclusiveness), variability in individual responses (as shown through interquartile ranges) was large, implying sizeable variation within each measure.

To examine whether these variables were associated with the second generation's Vietnamese skills, we computed Spearman correlations between questionnaire-derived variables and the second generation's speech ratings, separately for the groups of political ( $n = 21$ ) and economic ( $n = 12$ ) immigrants.<sup>1</sup> Among the political immigrants (see Table 4), there were weak-to-moderate positive associations involving the first generation's willingness to preserve the Vietnamese language and culture, where more support for this statement was associated with higher values across all speech ratings, most strongly for fluency (.42). In addition, there were medium-strength associations between the second generation's social network size, network intimacy, and density and their Vietnamese ratings, where a larger network size but lower intimacy and density were associated with less accented, more comprehensible, and more fluent Vietnamese speech, and with generally greater Vietnamese knowledge, although the associations for network intimacy were not as strong and did not involve as many ratings as those for network size and density. Finally, there were moderate-strength negative associations between the second generation's intercultural stress and their Vietnamese skills. Overall, greater intercultural stress was linked to less accented, more comprehensible, and more fluent Vietnamese speech, and to generally stronger Vietnamese knowledge.



**Table 4** *Correlations Between Questionnaire-Derived Variables and Second Generation's Speech Ratings for the Group of Political Immigrants (n = 21)*

Questionnaire-derived variable	Speech rating			
	Accent	Comprehen- sibility	Fluency	General knowledge
Parent's willingness to preserve	<b>0.30</b>	<b>0.32</b>	<b>0.42</b>	<b>0.34</b>
Parent's pride for Vietnam abroad	-0.15	<b>-0.34</b>	-0.09	-0.12
Parent's pride for current Vietnam	0.09	0.12	0.01	0.16
Parent's perception of Vietnam/language	-0.01	-0.06	-0.09	-0.02
Child's network size	<b>0.50</b>	<b>0.53</b>	<b>0.43</b>	<b>0.63</b>
Child's network density	<b>-0.52</b>	<b>-0.52</b>	<b>-0.50</b>	<b>-0.52</b>
Child's network intimacy	<b>-0.30</b>	-0.20	-0.23	<b>-0.34</b>
Child's intercultural stress	<b>0.41</b>	<b>0.35</b>	<b>0.42</b>	<b>0.45</b>
Child's discrimination	0.05	0.12	0.16	-0.10

*Note.* Associations greater than .25 (small effect) are bolded.

Among the economic immigrants (see Table 5), there were weak-to-moderate associations involving the first generation's pride in the present-day Vietnam and their perceptions of Vietnam and its language. In particular, stronger pride for the parents was associated with higher Vietnamese ratings for their children, particularly for accentedness (.40), fluency (.45), and general knowledge (.39). Similarly, greater acceptance of the current Vietnam and its language by the parents was linked to higher Vietnamese ratings for their children, most notably for accentedness (.32) and general knowledge (.31). In addition, as in the political group, larger network size and lower density for the second generation were associated with higher

rater-assessed Vietnamese, with weak-to-moderate associations, although less strongly than in the political group. In contrast, whereas network intimacy was associated negatively with the Vietnamese ratings in the political group, network intimacy was linked to all Vietnamese ratings positively in the economic group, with medium-to-strong associations. Finally, unlike in the political group, there were generally few notable correlations reaching the benchmark of a weak relationship for the second generation's perceived intercultural stress and discrimination.

**Table 5** *Correlations Between Questionnaire-Derived Variables and Second Generation's Speech Ratings for the Group of Economic Immigrants (n = 12)*

Questionnaire-derived variable	Speech rating			
	Accent	Comprehen- sibility	Fluency	General knowledge
Parent's willingness to preserve	0.17	0.00	0.08	<b>0.35</b>
Parent's pride for Vietnam abroad	0.03	0.08	0.17	0.09
Parent's pride for current Vietnam	<b>0.40</b>	<b>0.30</b>	<b>0.45</b>	<b>0.39</b>
Parent's perception of Vietnam/language	<b>0.32</b>	<b>0.27</b>	<b>0.25</b>	<b>0.31</b>
Child's network size	<b>0.33</b>	0.24	<b>0.30</b>	0.24
Child's network density	<b>-0.39</b>	<b>-0.34</b>	<b>-0.52</b>	<b>-0.44</b>
Child's network intimacy	<b>0.50</b>	<b>0.48</b>	<b>0.61</b>	<b>0.55</b>
Child's intercultural stress	-0.22	<b>-0.28</b>	-0.19	<b>-0.25</b>
Child's discrimination	0.17	0.22	0.08	0.04

*Note.* Associations greater than .25 (small effect) are bolded.

## **Discussion**

Our goal in this study was to document how the maintenance of Vietnamese in the second generation of immigrants differs by their family's emigration history (predominantly political vs. economic). The first-generation participants were generally successful at passing their HL on to their children, insofar as all second-generation speakers could use Vietnamese in response to simple prompts. However, because the child generation's speech ratings were significantly lower than those of their parents, there was clearly a decline in the children's speaking skills, and it seemed more pronounced in the families of economic than political immigrants. In addition, several variables capturing the first and the second generation's beliefs and social engagement profiles revealed links with rater-assessed Vietnamese in the second generation. However, the specific relationships appeared to depend on the first generation's primary reason for emigration, such that the same predictors often showed different (and sometimes opposite) associations for political versus economic immigrants. These results suggest complex interactions between the first generation's ethnolinguistic views and the second generation's social engagement in predicting HL maintenance. In the next several sections, we discuss these findings in light of relevant prior work while also providing supporting evidence from the participants' interview comments, to illustrate how our results are reflected in our participants' lived experiences.

### *First generation's ethnolinguistic identity*

A key finding of this study is that the role of various variables in HL maintenance differed for families that emigrated from their homeland for political versus economic reasons. This aligns with Perera's (2015) suggestion that the specific conditions that trigger emigration must be examined, because these circumstances might determine whether and to what extent

immigrants pass their HL down to their children. Although all first-generation participants left Vietnam after the Vietnam War, this event likely affected them differently, because the stated reason for emigration was political instability or even personal threat for some participants whereas it was economic hardship brought on by the war for others. Nevertheless, those who left primarily to escape political persecution and those who emigrated due to economic instability displayed distinct patterns in relation to HL maintenance in the second generation. Among the political immigrants, the first generation's willingness to preserve Vietnamese had a stronger association with their children's Vietnamese ratings than in the economic group, where this relationship emerged only for the general knowledge ratings. The political immigrants may have established themselves as members of an imagined nation (Bloch & Hirsch, 2016)—South Vietnam—which may have encouraged them to strengthen their ties to their Vietnamese variety and their Southern Vietnamese culture. This interpretation is consistent with the pattern of HL maintenance in Australia's Latvian diaspora, where their HL maintenance efforts were stronger before Latvia regained its independence, due to fear that the country's history and values would be eradicated by the Soviet authorities (Smolicz et al., 2001).

For the Vietnamese diaspora, North Vietnam's takeover of the South symbolized a threat that the language and culture of South Vietnam might be lost, prompting some political immigrants to take on an active role in preserving their language and culture. The fear of losing the "right" Vietnamese language is encapsulated in a comment by one first-generation political immigrant (P1):

They brought with them vocabulary from the North to the South. We don't understand those words, but they forced the Southern people to use the same words. The educated Northern people had already left the North in 1954, so the rest of them from the

countryside took over governmental positions, speaking with their provincial accent...  
and their children got influenced by their wrong usage, wrong pronunciation.

As illustrated in participants' interviews, in the political group, the desire to preserve Vietnamese seemed to translate into actions, which included specific community-oriented projects of "building a HL school" (P7 and P19, first-generation political immigrants), establishing "cultural centres" (P10 and P31, first-generation political immigrants), and organizing "a Vietnamese youth association" (P16 and P28, first-generation political immigrants), to provide formal, community-centred ways of teaching Vietnamese to the next generation. These efforts to preserve Vietnamese were likely heightened by the sociolinguistic landscape of Québec, with its ongoing legislation to strengthen the status of French (most recently, Bill 96: An Act respecting French, the official and common language of Québec, 2022) as a way of addressing concerns about the decline of French, especially among immigrants (Busque, 2021; Denoncourt, 2020). Against this backdrop, it is perhaps unsurprising that at least three major community organizations in the greater Montréal area currently provide Vietnamese instruction, and all three language schools are managed by families of political immigrants, which likely reflects their desire to preserve their South Vietnamese identity and to navigate a linguistic environment where government policies encourage immigrants to adopt French in all spheres of public life (Busque, 2021). The vigilance, protectiveness, and active engagement demonstrated by political immigrants in establishing ethnocultural centres most likely encapsulate their commitment to safeguarding values perceived to be eroded in Vietnam and challenging to maintain in Québec.

In contrast, among economic immigrants, it was the first generation's pride for the present-day Vietnam and their acceptance of Vietnam and its language that showed associations with the second generation's Vietnamese ratings (across most rated criteria)—a relationship not

attested in the political group. As some participants explained, their pride for the current Vietnam reflected their recognition of “the social development which is really good now” and their awareness that there are “big changes in the people” and that “younger Vietnamese generations are working really hard and passionately” (P11, first-generation economic immigrant). Economic immigrants also appeared to separate their disapproval of the current government from their pride for the country, as described by another first-generation economic immigrant (P35): “putting aside all the politics, I know that I am still a Vietnamese, I still see [national flag of Vietnam] representing me in aspects that do not involve politics.” Unlike political immigrants, economic immigrants may not have harboured or expressed a deep-seated existential trauma defining their loss of the homeland, so their children were presumably allowed and even encouraged to consume the Vietnamese culture, such as through “watching Vietnamese web dramas on YouTube” (C14, second-generation economic immigrant) and “listening to V-Pop [Vietnamese pop music]” (C35, second-generation economic immigrant), which may have provided these speakers with additional opportunities to use their HL in contexts relevant to their interests. This finding echoes observations in Korean communities outside South Korea—a diaspora that has emigrated mostly for economic reasons—where second-generation speakers are exposed to or engaged with the contemporary Korean culture either individually or through friendships with Korea-born international students (Park & Sarkar, 2007; Shin et al., 2016).

It is perhaps unsurprising that a similar relationship concerning the first generation’s pride for the present-day Vietnam and its language did not obtain in the political group. In fact, as revealed in the interviews, the parents’ disapproval of the entire country, not just its regime, was obvious to their children, for instance, as illustrated in a comment by a second-generation participant from the political group (C25):

My mom says that it's sad that we don't speak good Vietnamese, but the way she speaks about the Vietnamese culture is always inferior. I told her I would go back to study music in Vietnam, and she said that Vietnamese music offered no added values.

In another example highlighting the first generation's rejection of Vietnam, one first-generation participant, who emigrated for political and economic reasons (P36), noted:

My son used to swim very well. His trainer once said, with [his] statistics, he might not be able to participate in the Olympics as a Canadian, but there wouldn't be any problem to participate as a Vietnamese. My son got home to tell me that, and my first impulse, I said "No!"

Thus, overt or covert disapproval of Vietnam expressed by the parents from the political group, coupled with their efforts to provide in-house, community-centred opportunities for HL development, may have created pathways for their children's HL maintenance that did not rely on the active cultural links with the present-day Vietnam available for children of economic immigrants.

#### *Second generation's social networks*

Another finding of this study is that the second generation's social networks appeared to play a role in their HL maintenance. In terms of network size, larger social networks in the second generation were moderately associated with better accent, comprehensibility, fluency, and strongly associated with general Vietnamese knowledge in the political group, whereas these relationships were only weak for accent and fluency in the economic group. As described by one first-generation political immigrant (P20), the political group was more closely knit than the economic group:

The more influential and affluent Vietnamese came here right after the war and settled down all in [Montréal neighbourhood]... very rich. And then the Vietnamese labourers came and settled down everywhere else.

The community of political immigrants was likely held together by strong social and cultural ties between people representing an affluent and privileged social class prior to emigration. Having received better education, political immigrants were also more likely to gain employment in Canada, occupying prestigious jobs, such as doctors, nurses, engineers, and businesspeople. And having settled near other political immigrants, they may have surrounded themselves with likeminded, highly educated fellow immigrants. This may have created an ideal environment for their children to meet and befriend Vietnamese speakers from similar socioeducational backgrounds, with positive consequences for their Vietnamese.

In contrast, economic immigrants were more likely to work in menial, blue-collar, or low-prestige occupations, such as performing factory jobs or working from home (e.g., sewing, cooking). And because they did not typically settle in close-knit communities, there were fewer opportunities for their children to meet Vietnamese friends outside the home, which made it challenging for children to interact with individuals whose Vietnamese skills were similar or stronger than their own. This interpretation echoes the findings of Zhang's (2012) longitudinal study, where upper-class Mandarin-Chinese immigrants rarely interacted with working-class Fujianese-Chinese immigrants in Philadelphia, so children of the working-class group had diminished contact with educated HL speakers and few opportunities for language practice.

A novel finding of this study is the contrast between the political and economic groups in the role of the second generation's network intimacy, where stronger Vietnamese skills were associated with lower intimacy in social interactions in the political group but with higher



intimacy in the economic group. Based on prior research (Schneider & Ward, 2003), the level of intimacy was expected to predict HL maintenance positively, as speakers are more likely to maintain a language in an emotionally supportive network, which is what emerged in the economic group where network intimacy seemed more important than its size. In essence, for children of economic immigrants, HL maintenance was associated with language use within intimate interactions, most likely with immediately family and close friends. By contrast, the opposite finding in the political group can be explained through a transgenerational extension of the political conflict in the first-generation community. To various degrees, children are inheritors of the trauma experienced by their parents (Baack, 2017), which could reduce children's desire to explore the heritage for which they might harbour mistrust. This quote by a second-generation political immigrant (C10) illustrates how intergenerational trauma could manifest itself in the second generation:

I am not exposed to communities and friends my age, all the communities I know are from my parents and the population is older. So I don't feel integrated... But from what I know about the Vietnamese culture in Montréal, every time I hear something, there're conflicts between different groups... they always go against each other... It makes me scared to participate, and to pick a side.

For children of political immigrants, the conflict they perceived through intimate interactions with family and friends may have ostensibly prevented them from fully engaging with various aspects of their HL. Thus, in the political group, the second generation likely developed their HL skills through less intimate interactions with family and friends, or through conversations outside the community, because these experiences were less coloured by perceived or actual conflict.

A negative relationship between the second generation's network density and their Vietnamese ratings was surprising. This result, which was similar in the political and economic groups, runs counter previously reported claims that denser (more interconnected) social networks provide speakers additional support for language learning (Doucerain et al., 2015). Even though the second-generation Vietnamese speakers (regardless of their family's reason for emigration) enjoyed a relatively large social network, more connectivity between its members may not have been beneficial. For the children of political immigrants, dense networks may have amplified negativity toward the present-day Vietnam and its language or intensified community conflict. For the children of economic immigrants, dense networks may have involved small talk rather than in-depth conversations. In either case, denser networks may not have ensured that interactants develop HL skills, implying that—for a group isolated from its homeland culture—network size (a proxy for contact quantity) and intimacy (a proxy for contact quality) might be superior predictors of HL maintenance than network density.

#### *Communication-related stress*

Following Doucerain et al. (2015), we included two measures of communication-related stress capturing intercultural relationships and perceived discrimination, on the assumption that context-specific factors of social engagement determine HL maintenance (Lanza & Svendsen, 2007). Whereas perceived discrimination in the HL community was unrelated to the second generation's Vietnamese ratings, intercultural stress (defined as perceived tension between a speaker's HL and Canadian/Québec cultures) was positively linked with Vietnamese ratings. While intercultural stress was clearly not detrimental to (and may have been facilitative of) the second generation's Vietnamese skills, this association obtained only for the children of political immigrants. Perhaps intercultural stress—which likely captured these speakers' struggle to

reconcile their Vietnamese and Canadian/Québécois identities—emerged as a by-product of the formal ways in which the parents in this group approached HL maintenance, where socialization into the Vietnamese language and culture, besides the home, occurred through HL schools, centres, and associations. Because political immigrants were also more protective of their HL variety, they might have been applying more pressure on their children to speak and behave in culturally “correct” ways. Consequently, the second-generation speakers in this group may have been more exposed to criticism or pressure (however mild) about their HL, which could potentially further encourage them to improve their HL skills. It appears, then, that a focus on prescriptive language use, coupled with an emphasis on formal language education, could trigger intercultural stress for some second-generation speakers. Nonetheless, such stress may have a facilitative role in HL maintenance, insofar as it compels speakers to negotiate their multiple ethnocultural identities (Bourdieu, 1991) whereby they wittingly or unwittingly attend to and practice their HL. Needless to say, this highly speculative interpretation must be revisited in future work.

### **Limitations and Future Work**

Our findings are based on a small participant sample, so any generalization beyond this work requires caution. Participants were also recruited only from one location. Although North America is the destination for most South Vietnamese postwar immigrants (Barnes & Bennett, 2002), the specific context of Montréal may not reflect HL practices of the Vietnamese diaspora around the world, especially the communities that settled in previous Soviet countries. In addition, Montréal’s Vietnamese community resides in a French–English bilingual context, where the host community’s relationship with English speakers has been historically conflictual, which may not be common to other Vietnamese diasporas around the world. While our results

may not be readily generalizable to other immigrant communities, or for that matter, to other members of Montréal's Vietnamese diaspora, they are nevertheless beneficial in providing guidance for future research exploring immigrant communities whose emigration is caused by a sociopolitical conflict. In addition, our findings did not fully align with various assumptions of the social network analysis, supporting instead Lanza and Svendsen's (2007) suggestion that a typical quantitative approach must be accompanied by conversational data. While we did conduct interviews, they were used in a post hoc fashion to provide contextual detail to our quantitative data interpretations and were insufficient to fully explain surprising and unintuitive findings, such as the obtained negative relationships between the second generation's Vietnamese ratings and their network density. A positive outcome of this study, however, is that social network data must be considered not only alongside participants' qualitative comments but also in relation to measures of their acculturative stress.

### **Conclusion**

To summarize the findings of our exploratory study, a family's reason for emigration (i.e., predominantly political vs. economic) can reveal distinct patterns of HL maintenance in the second generation of speakers. In our participant sample, the children of economic immigrants tended to maintain Vietnamese to somewhat greater extent than the children of political immigrants, which likely reflected different orientations of economic and political immigrant households toward their heritage language and culture. For political immigrants, HL maintenance was likely fueled by parents' focus on preserving their heritage culture and language, principally through formal schooling, which exposed children to some acculturative stress and community conflict and resulted in children's use of Vietnamese in networks that largely lacked interactional intimacy. By contrast, first-generation economic immigrants

displayed pride in present-day Vietnam, its language, and accomplishments, with the consequence that their children could practice Vietnamese via exposure to present-day Vietnamese culture (e.g., through media) and through intimate conversations, likely with family members and friends. Broadly construed, our findings imply that HL development and maintenance are subject to many contextual influences (He, 2010). In the same ethnic community, a HL could develop in different ways within a single generation, and HL learning is grounded in people's participation in various social practices coloured by each family's unique past. This study, therefore, adds to a growing body of work whose goal is to revisit and re-evaluate various interpersonal and sociocultural dimensions of HL maintenance.

### **Author biography**

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### **Endnote:**

1. We excluded social network inclusiveness from all correlation analyses. With values near ceiling and little variance among them, participants varied little on this variable, which made it unlikely for any meaningful relationships to emerge.

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## Appendix A

### Ethnolinguistic Questionnaire

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#### Pride for the Vietnamese community abroad ( $\alpha = .77$ )

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1. I am proud to let people know that I belong to my ethnic group.
  2. I am proud of the achievements of my ethnic group abroad.
  3. I feel proud to see symbols of my ethnic group (such as the yellow flag) displayed around me.
  4. I am proud to be able to speak the language of my ethnic group.
- 

#### Pride for current Vietnam ( $\alpha = .87$ )

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1. I am also proud of the achievements of Vietnam (the country nowadays)
  2. I still feel proud as a Vietnamese to see the red flag displayed.
- 

#### Perceptions about Vietnam and its language ( $\alpha = .82$ )

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1. Vietnam will never realize its potential for as long as it remains a communist country
  2. There is a massive difference between overseas Vietnamese language (mostly spoken pre-1975) and the Vietnamese spoken in Vietnam right now.
  3. The Vietnamese spoken in Vietnam now is not correct any more because of the Northern people who had migrated to the South after 1975.
- 

#### Willingness to preserve Vietnamese language and culture

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1. The Vietnamese language and culture of Vietnam have to be preserved at all costs
- 

*Note.* All items rated on 9-point scale (1 = *disagree*, 9 = *agree*). No category names were presented in the questionnaire, and all items were randomized.

## Appendix B

### Social Network Survey

1. Please nominate up to 15 individuals who are members of the Vietnamese community and with whom you typically interact with in Vietnamese.
2. Please rate the level of intimacy with each friend on a 4-point rating scale (1 = *least close*, 4 = *closest*).

	Name (nickname or initials are acceptable)	Intimacy
1		1 2 3 4
2		1 2 3 4
3		1 2 3 4
...		1 2 3 4
15		1 2 3 4

3. Please indicate which friends also know each other.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1															
2															
3															
4															
5															
6															
7															
8															
9															
10															
11															
12															
13															
14															
15															

## Appendix C

### Communication-Related Stress

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#### Intercultural stress ( $\alpha = .71$ )

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1. I have had disagreements with other Vietnamese (e.g., friends or family) for liking Canadian/Quebec customs or ways of doing things.
  2. I have had disagreements with Canadians/Quebeckers for liking Asian customs or ways of doing things.
  3. I feel that my particular practices (mix of Vietnamese and Canadian/Quebec) have caused conflict in my relationships.
- 

#### Perceived discrimination in the heritage community ( $\alpha = .73$ )

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1. I have been treated rudely or unfairly because of my background.
  2. I have felt discriminated against by other Vietnamese because of my background.
  3. I feel that people very often interpret my behaviour based on their stereotypes of what “second-generations” are like.
- 

*Note.* All items rated on 5-point scale (1 = *disagree*, 5 = *agree*). No category names were presented in the questionnaire, and all items were randomized.

## Appendix D

### Interview Questions

#### *Interview with first-generation participants*

##### 1. Language maintenance at home

- I have heard from many second-generation Vietnamese who were born in the U.S that their parents would talk to them in Vietnamese but they would insist on answering in English. What language do you speak to your children at home? And what language(s) do your children use to reply? What do you do if they reply to you in English/French?
- Did you send them to a Vietnamese school or hire a tutor? Would you have done it?
- A friend of mine in Czech Republic taught her daughter Vietnamese through poems and some Vietnamese variety shows such as Paris by night. How did you introduce Vietnamese language and culture to your children?
- Why do you think it's important to maintain the heritage language?
- What has been the hardest part in maintaining Vietnamese?
- What would you have done better, in your opinion?

##### 2. The community

- Before Covid, were there many opportunities for Vietnamese to get together?
- Are your children interested in these events too?
- Are you aware of any organization in Montreal that aims to preserve Vietnamese language and culture?
- Do you think that the government should do more to help preserve Vietnamese?

##### 3. Political view and language

- Is there a difference between the Vietnamese spoken overseas and the Vietnamese spoken in Vietnam currently?
- Some people left Vietnam after the fall of Saigon and swore not to come back, so they don't find a reason to teach their children the language. What do you think of this?
- Some German say that speaking German reminds them of the war trauma. Have you ever felt the same with speaking Vietnamese?

#### *Interview with second-generation participants*

##### 1. Language pattern at home

- How much do you speak Vietnamese at home?
- What language do you speak to your siblings/cousins?
- Did you have a chance to study Vietnamese formally such as going to school or having a tutor? If so, was it effective?
- Were you interested in the language and culture first before studying it?
- A friend of mine in Czech Republic taught her daughter Vietnamese through poems and some Vietnamese variety shows such as Paris by night. Was it the same with your parents?

- I have heard from many second-generation Vietnamese who were born in the U.S that their parents would talk to them in Vietnamese but they would insist on answering in English. Have you seen the same thing in here (Montreal) too?
- I have noticed that some parents and grandparents are not happy hearing English or French spoken at home between siblings or cousins. Are your parents particularly strict about speaking Vietnamese at home?

## 2. The community

- Do you talk to your extended family members and/or your parents' friends? How frequently?
- A lot of people say that they manage to speak their heritage language well because their community is very supportive and encouraging. What do you think? Is it the same for you?
- Some people find it easier to speak a language over another because of the community's attitude towards the speakers. Is it easy to speak Vietnamese in the community? Is there any stigma around being Vietnamese but cannot speak Vietnamese well?
- The second-generation Koreans usually find themselves friends who are international students from Korea when attending Korean churches. How about in the Vietnamese community? Do you also have friends about your age whom you communicate in Vietnamese?

## 3. For the next generation

- Is it important for you to maintain the language? Why?
- Do you think the next generation of overseas Vietnamese will be able to speak Vietnamese very well?
- Do/Would you make an effort to teach your children?
- How do/would you do it?

## 4. Vietnamese section to extract for proficiency evaluation

- In your spare time, what do you like to do? What is your hobby? Why do you have this hobby? Is your family supportive of this hobby? Do you often watch Vietnamese movies or listen to Vietnamese music? Do you know anyone famous in Vietnam?
- What was your dream when you were a child? Are you going to school or working? What is your job / major now? What is a day in your life like?
- What food do you like the most? Can you describe your favorite food? Do you prefer to eat at home, cook or eat at a restaurant? Why?
- Have you traveled out of Quebec? Have you ever been to Vietnam? When was the last time you returned to Vietnam? At that time, where did you go and what did you do?
- Have you ever been to a Vietnamese wedding? Can I describe it to you? What did the bride wear? In what color? What did you eat then?