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**LANGUAGE CHOICE:  
ENGLISH OR RUSSIAN?**

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The resolution of the language question—whether to maintain the mother tongue, shift to the mainstream language, or try to maintain two or more languages in the family—creates a lot of psychological complications and linguistic reflections. The present book explores how external variables and internal controversies affect the choice of language by an individual family member as well as the family as a whole unit, and how this choice, in its turn, impacts the relationships within the family.

This study draws on the several theoretical domains of immigration, psychology, and language acquisition. The Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) data set helps to address the quantitative part of this book, while the qualitative part is based on in-depth case studies of four immigrant families.

Building on the fundamental position that development happens as the result of the resolution of controversies, I suggest that there are four levels of controversy located in the language-choice model: societal, family, personal, and eventual outcomes of these three levels. Four “language choice” profiles, designated as “Amotivational,” “Instrumental,” “Intrinsic,” and “Intrinsic +,” have emerged out of the theoretical and research findings. The findings show that the crucial characteristics of the families who chose to maintain the mother tongue and foster bi-literacy in their children are the following: (1) a stress on knowing the country of origin and its culture; (2) a declared desire within the family that the children be different from the parents’ perception of American children; (3) an emphasis by the parents on the children’s “Russianness” and on the formation of that ethnic identity; and (4) an emphasis on a consistently realized, strong language policy at home.

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