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Children of First Generation Ethiopian Immigrant Parents at Home and 
at Early Childhood Education Settings: Understanding 
their Experiences Through the Perspectives 
of their Parents and Teachers

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ABSTRACT

More than half of the children in early childhood education settings (ECES) in Toronto come from immigrant families with diverse languages, cultures and racial backgrounds. Yet, little is known about their experiences in their homes and in their ECES. The major purpose of this study was to explore some aspects of the experiences of children of first generation Ethiopian immigrant parents in these two settings, mainly, through the perspectives of their parents and teachers.

Qualitative research methodology was used to examine the experiences of six children. Their twelve parents and six teachers were interviewed. Observations were conducted in their homes and in their classrooms.

The conclusions that emerged from the study included: a) the children experienced intense uneasiness during their transitions from home to ECES; b) based on their transitional experiences from home to ECES, three groups of children were identified: children who cry and scream the moment they arrive at ECES; children who get excited and play well for the first two or more days and then start crying and screaming; and children who adapt to the situation easily; c) the experiences of the children are influenced by their parents’ experiences in their country of origin, Ethiopia, and in their new country, Canada; and d) the children’s experiences at home and at early childhood
education classroom settings (ECECS) are interconnected.

The study also discerned these themes: a) children are agents of change in their homes as the result of their experiences in ECES; b) children are bridges connecting home and ECECS and thus enabling parents and teachers to learn from each other; and c) children are curriculum co-developers contributing to the promotion of inclusiveness in the curriculum of ECECS.

In the process of learning the language of the ECES, English, the children passed through phases: talking in their own home language; uttering strange words; using few words/phrases; assigning the right words/phrases to the right things; and communicating in simple sentences.

In conclusion, this study shows that understanding the experiences of children at home and at ECES can help to facilitate better care and education for young children in general and for children of diverse cultures and languages in particular.
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MY MOTHER, SEMENEMARIAM WOLDEAMANUEL,
AND MY BROTHER, GIRMA WUBIE, BOTH OF
WHOM PASSED AWAY DURING THE PERIOD OF THIS THESIS WRITING.
EMAMA AND WONDMGETA, MAY YOUR SOUL REST IN PEACE
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CHAPTER ONE
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. BEHIND THE THESIS TOPIC: MY PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL JOURNEY

The majority of the children in Toronto schools come from immigrant families with diverse cultural, linguistic and racial backgrounds (Kaprielian-Churchill & Churchill, 1994). The same is true for children in ECES, early childhood education settings (Biemiller, Regan & Lero, 1992). The major problem is that these children are poorly understood and therefore are not effectively dealt with in ECECS, early childhood education classroom settings (Bernhard, Lefebvre, Chud & Lange, 1995, 1997). Among other things, I assumed that examining the experiences of such children at home and in ECES through the perspectives of their parents and teachers would be an avenue that may help to understand them. While this is the major reason for my venturing into this particular study, my personal and professional journeys have also contributed toward the choice of the study topic.

Apart from being a recent immigrant woman of Ethiopian origin with an Ethiopian cultural, religious and linguistic background, I have been immersed in the field of early childhood education for my entire adult life. I believe the road I traveled in the field of early childhood education was vast enough to bring valuable contributions to my thesis.

I was eighteen years old when I graduated from a teacher training institute in Ethiopia and started teaching young children in primary schools. A few years later, I was trained as an early childhood educator at Froebel College, Copenhagen, Denmark. During this time I had a chance of visiting ECES in Europe (Denmark, Sweden) and Africa (Ghana)
as a part of the training. I then taught in an Ethiopian ECES. Again, I had the chance of being trained in the Montessori method in London, England. Following, I worked as a teacher and a principal in different ECES where I learned a lot from the children and their parents. With this experience and education, I worked as a curriculum developer for early childhood education in the Department of Curriculum, Ministry of Education in Addis Ababa. During those times, I developed curriculum guides (Wubie, 1981), teachers’ guide (Wubie, 1982), wrote children’s books (Wubie, 1984a; Wubie, 1984b), and traveled on study tours both inside and outside Ethiopia. I also undertook research activities related to curriculum development and evaluation as a principal investigator (Wubie, Kebede, Mekonen & Moll, 1984; Wubie & Junge, 1987). After being involved in such areas of work for seven years, I was assigned as a senior expert in early childhood education service to the National Children’s Commission of Ethiopia where I worked for another seven years until I came to Canada in 1991 to study for my Master’s degree in early childhood education in the Department of Psychology, OISE.

My research paper for my Master’s degree was on early childhood education and parenting in Ethiopia (Wubie, 1993). Furthermore, I worked in a Toronto early childhood setting with children of recent immigrant parents from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds which adds to the length and the breadth of the road I have traveled in the field of early childhood education. So there was no doubt of the need to connect my thesis with the field of early childhood education, particularly as it related to children of recent Ethiopian immigrant parents.

Although I had decided that I would deal with early childhood education as related to children of Ethiopian immigrant parents in Toronto, I was still not sure of the specific
topic that needed to be investigated. In other words, the question that lingered for a long time was “what specific issue/issues do I want to research about children of Ethiopian origin in ECES in Toronto?” In my endeavor to answer this question, I decided to go back further and to travel on some of my personal and professional roads that I have passed through and to examine what I have in me, because I believe that self-examination and self-understanding are the keys to open the doors of ideas and thoughts (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; Holly, 1990; Hunt, 1987). In fact, “any inquiry process is within the context of a researcher’s personal experiences (and) general socio-cultural framework” (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984, p. 33). Particularly, one’s “experience of childhood is a valuable part of studying children” (Peterson, 1991, p. 1). So while traveling back and forth on the paths of my early personal life, at one point, I entered the memories of my childhood and came across some stories, ideas, events, incidents, activities and feelings that I believe have contributed to my choice.

I was born and brought up in one of the rural areas of Ethiopia in a huge family. My father was a farmer and landowner and my mother was a housewife. My parents and other family members taught my siblings and me what they thought was important for our future lives. The education process was informal and took place in the home environment and in the surrounding areas through day-to-day practices and human relationships. At that time, our relationships and experiences were with other people and the natural things around us that did not include human-made things such as radio and television. We were taught how to practice social life according to the norms, rules and culture of the villagers. Respect for God, parents and elders, love toward extended family, obedience, concern for others, remorse, empathy, forgiveness, self-discipline,
sharing, cooperation as opposed to individualism were amongst the most important values that were emphasized by our parents and the people in the village. From the age of four, I learned simple basic skills such as cooking, conducting the Ethiopian traditional coffee ceremony, baking 'Injera', flat and spongy bread that is the staple food of Ethiopia, knitting, spinning, cleaning and caring for others which my parents thought were compulsory to prepare a girl for her future husband and motherhood. Growing up as a little girl in my home environment, I did not have any commercially produced materials or toys to play with or printed children's book. My siblings and I played with things that we found around us and we heard stories that our parents and other family members told. There was a deep satisfaction from the fun and the joy of hearing and telling traditional stories and singing songs while we were sitting around the fire. Telling riddles, reciting proverbs, chasing one another in the wide open field, caring for animals, playing with mud, building with stones, blowing straws, making dolls, climbing and sliding on hills, making pots and cups from mud, playing roles of various kinds and wading in shallow waters were some of the activities that were our sources of joy and education. Even today, I often see myself walking through the backyard and the surrounding areas of my rural home. These memories are both in my conscious and unconscious mind. They are part of me. In spite of the fact that I have traveled a lot and lived in different parts of the world, none of the experiences and the places I have come across come into my dreams as often as the places and the experiences from my early childhood. I am not sure if this is also true of other people. Perhaps, this could be a topic of future research. But for me, none of my experiences as an adult have touched my life as much as my childhood experience has done. This is one of the things that has made me have a strong belief in
the importance of children's early experiences which, in turn, convinced me to propose a project that explores the experiences of children of Ethiopian first generation immigrant parents, mainly, through the perspectives of their parents and teachers.

Children start experiencing things the moment they are born and many theorists even suggest that children have experiences before birth. From early on, children are curious and eager to absorb these experiences and to make them part of themselves (Cameron, 1989). That is how they develop. From early on, the culture and the language of the home become an essential part of the children. So disparities between the backgrounds of children with their experiences in schools make them uncomfortable (Dei, 1996).

If I take my own experience as an example, having started life in a rural village and having a rural cultural background that was very different from the school culture, when I joined grade one for the first time, I found the classroom environment very unfamiliar to me. The walls were decorated with pictures of people, animals and other things which I had never seen before. The stories I was told, the songs I learned, the games I was expected to play were very different from what I had known, that is they were more European. So for the first few months, I felt disconnected and alienated from my home environment and its surroundings. That made my transition from home to school difficult. I would have liked to have had in the classroom some of the things that were in my home and in my village; I would have liked the teachers to ask me about the stories I knew or I heard from my home; I would have liked to play some of the games I knew how to play; I would have liked to been asked how I made toys in my home and I would have liked to see pictures of rural people and their works on the walls of the classroom. But nothing of this sort was in the classroom.
As an early childhood educator and a student of curriculum, when I remember this and similar circumstances, I ask "what went wrong? I believe the problem was that the curriculum and the teaching/learning process did not consider my rural home background and the local culture in which I grew up. At that time, there was no such notion of "home and school relationship" in the minds of educators in Ethiopia. Parents were not interested in the affairs of the so-called "modern school", particularly for girls. Actually, parents' lack of interest in the education of girls reminds me of how I joined school. As a girl, I was not destined to go to school. In other words, like many other parents in the village, my parents were not interested in sending me to school. Rather, they were interested in my early marriage. I joined school by accident and without their knowledge when I was about ten years old. How? One day I went to a school compound where my younger brother was attending. While my brother was in his classroom, I stayed in the compound playing. A security guard who knew my family and me came towards me and asked me what I was doing there. I told him that I was waiting for my brother. Instantly, I asked him if he could take me to the school office and register me as a student. He did. That particular incident was a turning point in my life as it made me join the world of education and escape from becoming a child bride and a child mother. Although my parents were not happy with that, they did not force me to leave school and get married. I thank them for that.

Coming back to the importance of considering children’s background and local culture, it is true that knowledge about others’ cultures, faiths, economies, peoples, histories, geographies, technologies, etc., is essential because peoples’ lives are “interconnected/interdependent” with events, incidents, actions and other phenomena in
other parts of the globe (Pike & Selby, 1988, 1995, 1999a, 1999b). But this does not mean that the school curriculum should ignore the background of the child and what is going on in her/his immediate environment. In fact, the curriculum needs to blend the experiential background of the child with elements of local and global knowledge (Pike & Selby, 1995, 1999a, 1999b). Dei, James, James-Wilson, Karumanchery & Zine (2000, p. 57) also argue that a sound educational system provides "curriculum that meets concerns and aspirations while framing those issues within global contexts". When I look back at my experiences in my early school years with my present eyes, I conclude that ignoring the experiential backgrounds of children promotes education that is ill-suited to healthy children's development.

Therefore, among other things, this early experience of mine triggered my journey to understand the experiences of children of first generation Ethiopian immigrant parents at home and in ECES, mainly through the perspectives of their parents and teachers, and, in turn, to search for themes, ideas, theories and concepts that could contribute to the contents of curriculum and the teaching/learning process in classroom settings with children of different cultural, racial and linguistic backgrounds. Moreover, working in Canadian ECES in Toronto provided me with the opportunity to observe the challenges and the successes of children of recent immigrant parents with different cultures and languages. In other words, in those settings I was able to observe the children's experience during their transition period from home to ECECS. It was also there that I observed and felt the new immigrant parents' tensions, frustrations and successes in dealing with their children's transition from home to ECECS. Other than this, I realized the scarcity of literature that deals not only with the experiences of children of first
generation immigrant parents in ECES, but also with children’s experiences at home and at ECES in general.

Furthermore, my involvement in Professor George Dei’s SSHRC, Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada, research project on “Home, Family and Community Initiatives of Inclusive Schooling” as a graduate assistant not only gave me access to first generation Ethiopian immigrant parents, but also enabled me to have a better understanding of the importance of home in the education of the young. Participating in this project provided me with insights on the importance of shared responsibilities between home, communities and schools in order to promote inclusiveness in Canadian school systems. Apart from this, since most of my course papers at OISE, dealt with the education of young children and their parents, the experiences I had in writing these papers have added to my interest in researching issues of young children and their families. For example, when I took a course on “Global Education: Theory and Practice” instructed by Professor David Selby, I designed a project that enabled me to teach mothers on the “inculcation of peace education in the minds of early childhood age children in their homes” and to evaluate the results. The participants in this project were twelve first generation Ethiopian immigrant mothers and their children. Dealing with these mothers gave me an opportunity to become familiar with some of their concerns and aspirations for the education of their young children.

As most of the preceding explanations indicate, my interest in dealing with the experiences of children of first generation Ethiopian immigrant parents at home and at ECES emanated not only from the need to understand the experiences of children of immigrant families in Toronto ECES and home settings but also from my personal and
professional experiences. However, I was not sure how much sense the project would give to others. At times I had doubts. It was only after I wrote my plan of study on this topic and was awarded a SSHRC scholarship that I realized that the topic might be of interest to other educators.

In spite of the encouragement I gained from being awarded the SSHRC Scholarship, however, I felt that I was too slow in my “thesis journey” (Cole & Hunt, 1994). At times, I likened my thesis journey to an “Ethiopian priest’s journey on a mule”. In Ethiopia, if someone stops every now and then while traveling somewhere, it is common to say that so and so’s journey is like a “priest’s journey on a mule”. The reason behind this saying is that in Ethiopia when a priest travels by a mule he (I use “he” because priests in Ethiopia are only males) is usually stopped by people who are followers of Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity. Why do they stop him? They may stop him because they expect him to bless them; they may stop him because they may want him to consult him about a problem that they believe he might solve; they may stop him because they may want to salute the cross that he carries in his hand; they may stop him because they may want him to visit their homes and sprinkle holy water; they may stop him because they may want him to bless the bread they prepare to celebrate a saint’s day. Whatever the reason, he is always stopped by an individual or a group of individuals. So the priest usually does not reach his destination on time, though he eventually arrives there. But this is normal for the priest, because stopping and contacting people is part of his job.

Similarly, whenever I started writing this thesis with full concentration, suddenly an idea would strike. I would stop writing and go to the library for literature to support or negate that idea. Sometimes, the idea had relevance to what I wanted to write. That made me
feel good. Other times, I spent hours or days, even months reading books or articles without getting any literature relevant to what I wanted to write. That made me feel frustrated. There were all sorts of ups and downs in the process of writing this thesis; however, I said to myself “as stopping his journey every now and then and dealing with people is part of the job of the Ethiopian priest, stopping writing and searching for books or articles every now and then is also part of my job as a thesis writer”. Encouraged by my own advice and hoping that I would eventually come to the end of my work, I went back to where I was in my writing journey. But one important thing I bore in mind in the process of my writing was not to step out of the track of my journey. In other words, one of the important things to remember was not to lose the essence/purpose of the thesis.

1.2. BACKGROUND AND THE STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Approximately 215,000 immigrants and refugees enter Canada every year (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 1994). For example, according to the Immigration Information Management Technology Office, Ottawa, in 2000, 227,363 immigrants entered Canada. The initial destination of about fifty percent (50%) of the immigrant population in Canada is Ontario (Kaprielian-Churchill & Churchill, 1994). Furthermore, more than half of the immigrant population in Ontario reside in Metropolitan Toronto (Kaprielian-Churchill & Churchill, 1994). These data indicate that schools, including ECES, in big cities such as Toronto serve a large number of children with cultural, linguistic, and racial diversity. In fact, as Biemiller, Regan & Lero (1992, p. 150) state “more than half of the children entering the Toronto and Vancouver school system... come from families whose native language is neither English nor French. Thus daycare
and kindergarten programs must be prepared to deal with children and parents from many linguistic backgrounds”.

However, little is known about the experiences of children of immigrant parents, particularly in ECES. As Bernhard, Lefebvere, Chud & Lange (1995) argue, children with diverse culture and language are poorly understood in such settings and the “nature of educational outcomes” for them is just starting to be researched. That means there is a need to understand these children in order to work with them effectively. Actually, quite a number of articles in the literature suggest that, political, economic, historical, social dynamics such as race, gender and class, cultural and linguistic contexts including child-rearing practices influence children’s experiences/developments in school settings (Bernhard, 1995; Dei, 1994; Delgado-Gaitan 1987; Gibson & Ogbu, 1991; Morgolin, 1974; Trueba, Jacobs, & Kirton 1990; Villarruel, Imig & Kostenlnik, 1995). While this is the case, many current developmental theorists still study children's social, psychological and intellectual development in school settings without sufficient attention to the intervention of social and cultural systems (LeVine, Dixon, LeVine, Richman, Leiderman, Keefer, & Brazelton, 1994). LeVine, Dixon, Levine, Richman (1994) strongly argue that while "seeking to identify the neuropsychological ‘hardware’ for behavioural development, many child development theorists have often overlooked the cultural ‘software’ that gives its direction in order to understand children’s development". On the other hand, “unless more is known about a child’s cultural background, we have little basis for understanding him” (Morgolin, 1974, p. 7). Another writer contends that although cultural and linguistic context is central to all aspects of children's development, it is too often neglected in developmental study (Bornstein, 1991). In fact, as Bernhard
(1995) writes, a lot of current ideas and theories of child development revolve around the notion of "universal standard model" based on Western investigations and difference from this standard could be considered as "deficiencies, disorders or deviance". Early childhood educators trained in concepts of child development without understanding the experiences of linguistically and culturally different children face numerous challenges and problems in working with children of diverse linguistic, ethnic and cultural backgrounds (Bernhard, 1995; Bernhard, Lefebvre, Chud & Lange, 1997). "Many early childhood education graduates feel unprepared to work with culturally, racially and linguistically diverse populations" (Bernhard, Lefebvre, Chud & Linge, 1997, p. 7). This reminds me of my own initial experience of working with children of recent immigrant families in an early childhood setting in Toronto. Although I taught in ECES in Ethiopia for many years, I had never dealt with children of immigrant parents whose culture and languages were different from the culture and the language of the ECES where I was working nor had I come across literature on how to deal with them. So initially, I did not find it easy to deal with these children. This suggests that this issue needs to get a special attention in teachers's training. I strongly believe that apart from training teachers on how to deal with children of diverse cultures, languages, class, races and gender studying the experiences of such children and identifying the problems is an avenue towards promoting effective care and teaching/learning process in ECES. I also believe that studying the experiences of children in ECES without considering their experiences at home would be incomplete because as many writers indicate, more than in any other level of education, research on children of early childhood education levels needs the connection of home settings with that of early childhood settings (Pugh, 1985; Rogoff,
1989; Zigler & Kagan, 1982). This is the major reason for looking at the experiences of children of first generation Ethiopian immigrant at home and at ECES.

Another problem has to do with the methodology of studying young children. As explained in Chapter Four, the perspectives of the parents, the teachers and my own observations in the children’s home and ECECS are the sources of the data for the study. In fact, as McKIM (1993) writes, children themselves, teachers and parents are the "three primary partners" who are the main basis of knowledge on the experiences of children (Bierman, 1996) in early childhood education and home settings. I strongly believe that parents and early childhood education teachers are a major source of knowledge in understanding children's development or experiences. In other words, tapping information from parents' and teachers' experiential knowledge helps us to understand the experiences of children of first generation immigrant families; however, in spite of the fact that parents and teachers play an important role in the experiences of children in ECES, few research projects on the experiences of children in ECES consider teachers' and parents' extensive experiences and perspectives as a source of information. As Wolfendale (1983, p. 92) writes, particularly "parents' own views on their approaches to child-rearing, child-management, their aspirations for their children, their perceptions of their success or failure of their task, have largely gone unexplored and unrecorded". Rather, many previous researchers used "professionally defined instruments and categories" (Darling, 1989) for which parents and teachers were supposed to indicate rating scales for statistical purposes. While I recognize the usefulness of this widely used method of studying children, my present study uses the qualitative research approach in understanding parents' and teachers' own "experiential knowledge"(Hunt, 1987),
practices, perspectives, beliefs, attitudes, skills, challenges and successes with regard to
the children’s past, present and perceived experiences in their homes and in ECES.

1.3. THE OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY AND
THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The major objective of this study is to explore the experiences of children of first
generation Ethiopian immigrant parents at home and at ECES, mainly through the
perspectives of their parents and teachers, in order to search for ideas, themes, concepts
and processes that could contribute to: a) enriching curriculum and enhancing effective
teaching/learning processes in ECES with children of diverse culture and languages; b)
policy making with regard to early childhood education and care settings that serve
linguistically, culturally and racially diverse children; c) training of early childhood
education teachers; and d) training of parent educators, particularly parent educators who
deal with recent immigrant families.

Taken together, the experiences of six children of first generation Ethiopian immigrant
parents were explored in two major arenas, the home and the ECES, mainly, through the
perspectives of their parents and teachers. In doing this, I used five major points in time:
a) their experiences at home before they started attending early childhood education
settings which I termed “pre-early childhood education settings experiences”; b) their
experiences at ECES during their transition from home to ECES which I termed
“transitional experiences”; c) their experiences at ECES during their adjustment; d) their
experiences at home after they got used to the language and other situations of the ECES
which I referred it as “post adjustment experiences at home”; and e) their experiences at
ECECS after they adjusted in the ECECS itself which is termed as "post adjustment experiences in the ECECS". Furthermore, the relationships of these experiences at different points in time and places were examined to understand their effects on the care and the education of the children in the early childhood education and the home settings.

I strongly believe that one of the points that departs or separates my study from previous studies is the fact that it looked at the connection of the children's experiences in their homes and in their ECES and carefully examined the implication it has for the curriculum and the teaching/learning process in the ECECS. In other words, although authors such as Bronfenbrenner (1986), Delgado-Gaitan, 1990, Goldenberg, 1993) mentioned that children's experiences at home and at ECES are interrelated, I have not come across a research that looked how children's home experiences are interrelated with their experiences in ECES and vice versa. The other major point that departs or separates my study from the previous studies is my conceptualization of looking at the children's experiences at five points in time and examining their relationships as indicated in the above paragraph. In fact, the major research questions also revolve around the experiences of the children at these five points in time:

* How/what were the children's experiences before they started attending ECES?
* How/what were their experiences during their transition from home to ECES?
* How/what were their experiences during their adjustment in the ECES?
* How/what were/are their experiences in their homes after they got used to the ECES?
* How/what were/are their experiences in the ECES after they got familiarized or got used with the ECES itself?
By making the children's experiences the focal point the study offers insights into Ethiopian indigenous child-rearing practices and the parents' perspectives on their expectations, hopes and challenges. It also gives insights into the perspectives of the early childhood education teachers on their challenges, skills, knowledge and techniques of dealing with children of diverse culture and language in ECECS.

1.4. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Although understanding or recognizing the experiences of children with linguistic and cultural differences in early childhood education and home settings is helpful to promote better care and education, it did not get the attention it should have had from early researchers. The goal of the present study is to fill this gap. As indicated earlier, particularly, looking at the experiences of children of first generation immigrant parents in their own home environment and in their ECECS at five different points in time, to my knowledge, has not been researched. I believe this conceptualization of children's experiences at five points in time will contribute to future research.

Bernhard, Lefebvre, Chud & Lange (1995, p. 3) write that “the mere recognition of cultural diversity or mere celebration of holidays or displaying different ethnic food and other stuff could be superficial” without a deeper understanding of the experiences of children and their parents from different cultural and linguistic background. I believe that this study will contribute to a deeper understanding of the beliefs and values of Ethiopian immigrant parents and their children's experiences at home and at ECES that may inform professionals dealing with children of Ethiopian origin. This, in turn, might contribute to the understanding of the experiences of children of first generation immigrant parents.
from other cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Other than this, as the study examines the children’s experiences at home and at ECECS simultaneously, it adds to the literature of cross-situational comparisons.

As Nsamenang (1992) writes, literature on child development and child-rearing practices in Africa is lacking. This study offers insights into child-rearing practices in an African country, Ethiopia. Furthermore, since I have been frequently requested by many Ethiopian immigrant community members in Toronto to prepare materials for children that may help to sustain the cultural and linguistic heritage of Ethiopian immigrants population while adjusting to the culture and the language of Canada, it is my hope that the themes, ideas, images, skills and knowledge that have emerged from this study might contribute as a source of ideas in responding to their requests. For example, it might help me in consulting them as to how to maintain their home languages and cultures. I have also a strong belief that this study would be of particular importance to Ethiopian immigrants in Diaspora in general and to members of the Ethiopian community in Toronto in particular, should it be published in whole or in part.

1.5. THE LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

One may say that due to the sample size and the process of the selection of the participants, the findings in this study may not be generalized. However, as indicated in Chapter Four Section 4.1., the themes, ideas, concepts, and theories that emerge in the process of a study based on qualitative research approach are considered to be useful and transferable to other situations (Donmoyer, 1990; Eisner, 1991; Hathway, 1995; Hitchcock & Hughes, 1989; Kirk & Miller, 1986; Merriam, 1988). What this means is
that although this study is focused on the experiences of only six children of first
generation Ethiopian immigrant parents, the notions, ideas, concepts, theories and process
that emerged from the analysis of the data, may be applicable to other children of similar
backgrounds. One of the objectives of a study based on qualitative approach is to come
up with ideas, theories, notions, concepts and process which resonate in the minds of
readers. I strongly believe that this study has come up with numerous notions, concepts,
ideas, theories and processes which may resonate in the minds of readers and influence
their decisions or actions.

What I consider a limitation in this study, though, is that since a large portion of the
data is based on the recollection of the parents and the teachers on the past experiences of
the children, there could be many experiences of the children that the parents and the
teachers could not recall.

1.6. OUTLINE OF THE THESIS

Determining what information to add or to delete from this study has been both
exciting and challenging and has required much thinking and contemplating. The thesis
consists of eight chapters. Chapter One is an introduction that provides an overview of
my personal and professional journey that contributed to the choice of the thesis topic, the
background and rationale behind the study, the purpose and the significance of the study,
the limitations of the study, definitions of terms and the outline of the study. Chapter
Two deals with an overview of Ethiopia in terms of its land, people and history. It also
highlights the major causes for the exodus of Ethiopians to many parts of the world. The
second chapter also offers insights on indigenous child rearing practices in Ethiopia.
Chapter Three is the literature review. This chapter is divided into sections. The first section deals with the literature on early childhood education; the second section deals with the literature related to the home as an educational institution; the third section deals with the literature related to previous studies on experiences of children; the fourth section discusses the literature on previous studies related to immigrant children and their parents and the fifth section deals with the theories of child development in general and theories of child development in context in particular. Chapter Four discusses the methodology of the study. In this chapter, some theories of qualitative and quantitative research approaches are indicated and the justification for choosing the qualitative methods for this particular study is underlined. Following that, the research design in terms of research site, access to study sites, participants of the study, data gathering techniques, data analysis and issues of ethics are discussed.

Chapters Five, Six and Seven deal with data analysis. In each of these chapters the themes, ideas, theories, concepts and process that have emerged from the data are analyzed and discussed. Chapter Five, deals with the parents' reports of the experiences of their children before they started attending ECES. Here, the children's immersion in the culture and the language of the home and the parents' criteria for choosing ECES are highlighted. Chapter Six deals with the accounts of the parents and the teachers with regard to the transition of the children from home to ECES. In this chapter, the intensity of the children's difficulty in adjusting to the ECES and the techniques that teachers use to help the children adjust and the various stages that the children pass through while adjusting to the language of the ECES are featured. Chapter Seven provides the narratives of the parents and the teachers, supplemented by my own observation data in
the children's homes and the early ECES, with regard to: a) the post adjustment experiences of the children in their homes; b) the post adjustment experiences of the children in ECES. Here, the teachers' perspectives on the post adjustment characteristics of the children in the study, the physical set up or the physical organization of the classrooms and the materials in them and the children's activities are described. Above all, the interconnectedness of the children's experiences at home and at ECES and the implications it has for the curriculum and the teaching/learning process in the ECES are featured. Chapter Eight is devoted to summarizing, identifying the thesis contributions and reviewing the implications of the thesis to theories and practices of teaching young children of immigrant parents.

1.7. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

ADJUSTMENT

Adjustment in this study refers to the children's ability to adapt to the language, culture and other aspects of the ECES.

'BAITAWAR'

'Baitawar' is an 'Amharic' (Ethiopian national language) word which refers to persons who are not familiar with human and non-human situations of a place when they come across it for the first time. In this context, when I say "baitawar children" I am referring to children whose home language and culture are different from the language and the culture of the ECES where they attend, particularly, in the earlier period of their attendance.
CULTURE

Culture has been defined in many ways (Banks, 1987). Such definitions include: the way of life of society consisting of ways of behaving or norms of conduct, characteristics, beliefs, knowledge, values, attitudes, and skills (Brislin, 1981; Fetterman, 1989; Gordon, 1978); a system of shared technological, social, aesthetic and attitudinal product of human beings which consists of beliefs, cognitive styles, language, religion, habit of thinking, patterns of social and interpersonal relationships, tools and other materials and nonmaterial achievement of a group of people (Bruth & Manning, 1992; Pai & Morris, 1978); family roles, child-rearing patterns, communication styles, peoples' goals in life and their beliefs about human nature (York, 1991). Although these aspects of culture are interrelated, the functional definition of culture for this particular study will include the cultural aspects that have to do with patterns of behaviour, attitudes, beliefs, values, language, interpersonal relationships, religion, communication styles and child-rearing practice.

EXPERIENCE

In this study, experience is defined as some aspects of the social, emotional, psychological and physical elements that children of first generation Ethiopian immigrant parents come across or pass through in their homes and in their ECES that may make a temporary or permanent impact on their lives.

FIRST GENERATION ETHIOPIAN IMMIGRANT PARENT

In this study, the phrase “first generation Ethiopian immigrant parents” refers to the parents of the children in this study who were born, brought up and lived in Ethiopia as adults, fled their country and were given sanctuary in Canada as “convention refugees”.
"A convention refugee is a person who has been found to fear persecution in his or her country of origin because of race, religion, nationality, membership in a social group, or political opinion" (http://itdepot.org/immgRefugee.htm, July 9, 2001). These parents fled their country of origin in fear of persecution mainly due to their political opinions.

HOME LANGUAGE

The mother tongue of first generation Ethiopian immigrant parents in this study. The language is used at home and in other places to communicate with people of similar linguistic origin.

IMMIGRANTS

Persons who leave their country of origin either voluntarily or involuntarily and live in another country for economical or other reasons.

NATIVE CHILDREN

In this study "native children" is used to denote children of parents whose cultures and languages are similar to the culture and the languages of the ECES. It is important to note that in this thesis "native children" does not refer to children of aboriginal origins.

POST ADJUSTMENT EXPERIENCE

The phrase "post adjustment experience" refers to the experiences of the children after they get used to the language, the culture and other situations of the ECES.

RE-ADJUSTMENT

Readjustment refers to the initial adjustment of children of first generation Ethiopian immigrant parents in their home environments after they get used to the linguistic, cultural, educational and other related aspects of the ECES.
ABBREVIATIONS

The following acronyms (abbreviations) have been used throughout the thesis:

ECECS: early childhood education classroom settings.

ECES: early childhood education settings.
CHAPTER TWO
2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON ETHIOPIA

2.1. INTRODUCTION

In the minds of many people, Ethiopia means what they see in the Western media: famine and war. The other dimensions are seldom seen. In an effort to provide a background to this thesis, the present chapter gives a bird’s eye-view of the other dimensions of Ethiopia in terms of its land, people, history and religions.

Before 1974, it was almost unknown for Ethiopians to leave their country and change their nationality. Ethiopians who left for business or educational purposes, including myself, could not wait to return home as soon as we had fulfilled our missions. But after 1974, a series of exoduses that had never been seen before in the history of Ethiopia took place. The twelve first generation Ethiopian immigrant parents in Toronto, who are the major participants of this study, are among the millions of Ethiopians who fled their country during this exodus. So a section of this chapter briefly discusses the political contexts behind their flights.

As Nsamenang (1992) writes, very little is known in the West about child rearing in the non-Western World, particularly in Africa. Trawick-Smith (1997, p. 24) also writes that “a clear picture of the lives of young children in non-European societies is lacking”.

In other words, there is a need to bring child-rearing practices in developing countries into the child development literature. In an effort to fill this gap and to show the cultural background of first generation Ethiopian immigrant parents in terms of child-rearing practices, the last section of this chapter is devoted to the child-rearing practices in Africa in general, and on child-rearing practices in Ethiopia in particular.
2. 2. THE LAND

Ethiopia is located in the northeast part of Africa between three and eighteen degrees north of the equator, in the area usually known as the Horn of Africa. The country has an area of over a million square metres with immense topographical and climatic contrast such as high mountains that range from 4600 metres above sea level to flat low lands that sink below sea level. The temperature ranges from icy cold in the mountains to torrid low lands where one can find places that are considered amongst the hottest in the world (Pankhurst, 1990). The great Rift Valley running in a north-southwest direction divides the high land into two. A series of lowlands, semi-desert plains, and steppes characterize the northwestern and eastern region of the country and tropical rain forest and savannah grasslands are found in the southwest central part of the country (Wubneh & Yohanis, 1988). As Ullendorff (1968) writes, Ethiopia is "a country of great natural beauty marked by a vast mountain massif with a mean height of some 8000 feet". The Abaye, as it is known locally, or the Blue Nile, as it is known internationally, whose waters are vital to both Egypt and Sudan begins in Ethiopia. Although Ethiopia is the source of the Nile, which provides almost 80% of the water consumed in Egypt, the name Ethiopia has become almost synonymous war, famine, and poverty and is considered as one of the troubled spots in today's world, a place from where many people immigrate to other parts of the world. Why is this so? This question is addressed in Section 2.5 of this chapter.
2. 3. THE PEOPLE

The total population of Ethiopia is estimated to be sixty one million and six hundred seventy-two thousand (61,672,000) of which 52,598,000 live in rural areas and 9,074,000 live in urban areas (Central Statistical Authority, 1998). The country is a land of various ethnic and linguistic groups which comprise four broad language groups: Semitic, Cushitic, Omotic and Nilo-Saharan. A total of eighty languages (Debela, 1995) and two hundred dialects are spoken. It has a very ancient written language known as Geez that is probably as old if not older than Hebrew, Aramaic and ancient Greek. This language was used during the peak of ancient Ethiopian civilization. Presently, it is considered to be a sacred language and is still used as the language of the Ethiopian Orthodox Christian Church. The national language of Ethiopia, Amharic, which is probably the only African language with its own script, was also derived from Geez.

Although Ethiopia is "a museum of peoples, languages and faiths" (Debela, 1995:146), for centuries there have been religious, cultural, linguistic and other interactions that have created a common bond among its people. For Ethiopians, it was traditional to unite and fight against foreign invaders. Due to the strength and the unity of the people, Ethiopia was able to avoid colonization by European powers, with the exception of one of its provinces, Eritrea, and the brief five-year occupation by Italy from 1935-1941. A case in point is the famous battle of Adwa between Ethiopia and Italy that ended up with the embarrassing defeat of the Italians by Ethiopian people under the leadership of King Menelik Second in 1896. This Ethiopian victory galvanized the nationalistic movements in Africa (Halliday, 1983) and among people of African origin in the Diaspora. From time immemorial the history of Ethiopia has been intertwined with a series of wars.
defending our country from external aggressions. This is one of the factors that contributed to the country’s deterioration in terms of economic and human resources.

The people of Ethiopia are devoted to their faiths. In many ways, whatever happens to them is related to their faiths. Although they are materially poor they are spiritually rich. It is their spiritual beliefs that gives them the energy and stamina to live and take care of each other in times of war and other catastrophes. Humbleness and respectfulness are among the values most cherished. Their social life is strong and supportive. In rural areas mental depression and suicide rarely exist. People are usually happy in their close relations.

In many rural parts of Ethiopia, hired police and other security forces play little role in keeping peace and in solving conflict among people. The people have their own traditional ways of detecting wrong doers and solving conflicts. For example, when the present government took power from the past military government, it dissolved the police force and there were no government employed police force in many towns and rural areas of Ethiopia. The individuals and community members became peacekeepers. In other words, Ethiopians have their own indigenous knowledge concerning solving conflict amongst themselves. I believe that a relevant research question is: could this indigenous knowledge of solving conflict among people be explored and be taught in the Ethiopian schools?

2.4. HISTORY AND RELIGION

Historically, Ethiopia is one of the oldest states in the World and traces its origin for more than five thousand years (Gebrewold, 1990). The Ethiopian monarchs traced their
dynasty (Solomonic Dynasty) from the union of the legendary Queen of Sheba and the Biblical King Solomon (Halliday, 1983). The late Emperor Haile Selassie was said to be "the 252 emperor in the line of Solomonic dynasty" (Gebre-Tsadick, 1982, p. 18).

"Ethiopia was and still is associated with the romantic Biblical names of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba" (Debela, 1995, p. 149). The antiquity of this country is witnessed by the Bible itself in which statements about Ethiopia are made more than forty times. It is a country where one could trace "one of the ancient civilizations that survived into the latter half of the twentieth century and therefore became a symbol of political independence and cultural continuity in Africa as well as for many of African descent living in America" (Halliday, 1983, p. 5). For example, in the 1920s, one of the West Indian political and religious movements identified itself with Ethiopia and its crown prince, Ras Teferi, later known as Haile Selassie, which resulted in the formation of a faith group known as "Rastefarians". Furthermore, political leaders like Nelson Mandela of South Africa had a special admiration for and fascination for Ethiopia and said: "Ethiopia always has a special place in my imagination and the prospect of visiting Ethiopia attracted me more strongly than a trip to France, England and America combined. I felt I would be visiting my own genesis unearthing the roots of what made me an African" (http://www.ethiopiafirst.com., Feb. 5, 2001)

When it comes to spiritual and other indigenous beliefs, Ethiopians follow two major religions, Christianity and Islam. Judaism, which was once a popular religion in Ethiopia, is also still practised in some parts of the country. In fact, one of the things that puzzled many European writers about Ethiopia is the presence of Judaism in a black country for thousands of years. Many were puzzled because they could not imagine the existence of
black Jews in the continent of Africa and began a series of investigations. A case in point is the “quest” raised by Hancock (1992) as to why the “Arc of the Covenant” is so cherished as part of the Ethiopians’ faith and tradition and how the original “Arc of the Covenant” itself is believed to be found in Ethiopia.

Although there are some variations from ethnic group to ethnic group, these religions/beliefs have become part of the daily life and the culture of the Ethiopian people because they have been there for thousands of years. For example, Christianity is said to have been introduced in Ethiopia in about 38 A. D. As stated in the Bible, an Ethiopian eunuch was baptised by Phillip (Act 8, no. 26-39). So it is believed that “it was the baptized Ethiopian eunuch instructed by Phillip who brought Christianity to Ethiopia” (Gebre-Tsadick, 1983). Christianity became the state religion in 309 A. D. (Gebrewold, 1990). Christianity is unique in Ethiopia in a sense that it is a blend of Judaism, indigenous Ethiopian culture and Christianity itself. Along with earlier indigenous beliefs, the notion of the Old Testament plays a large role in Ethiopian Christian religion and culture. Many customs of the Old Testament like the ritual of circumcising a male child on the eighth day after birth, the dietary laws, the Saturday Sabbath and others have survived in the practice of many Ethiopian Christian people (Kaplan, 1992). These centuries old religious practices have a great force in the thinking of the people for they frequently mention religious concepts in their everyday life (Knut, 1980). For centuries travellers have detected in Ethiopian Christians, the authentic flavour of the Old Testament. That is the biblical atmosphere manifests itself in Ethiopia not only in attitudes, beliefs and in the general quality of life that is reminiscent of the Old Testament World, but is also expressed in numerous tangible ways including child-
rearing practices (Ullendorff, 1968).

The Muslim religion was also introduced in Ethiopia during the time of the prophet Mohammed in about 611 A.D. (Gebrewold, 1990). In fact, when the early followers of Prophet Mohammed were persecuted, they immigrated to Ethiopia and were offered sanctuary during which Prophet Mohammed referred to Ethiopia as a country of "righteousness" (http://www.ethiopiafirst.com, Feb. 5, 2001). In looking at the length of time that Christianity and Islam have existed in Ethiopia and the way the two are blended with indigenous beliefs, I do not consider these religions foreign because they have been part and parcel of the culture of Ethiopia and have had a strong influence in every-day life including child-rearing practices.

2.5. BEHIND THE EXODUS: RED TERROR

Emperor Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia who ruled the country for half century played a vital role not only in the history of Ethiopia but also in the history of Africa. In fact, he was referred to as the "Father of African Unity for his efforts in establishing the Organization of African Unity in 1963" (Metaferia & Shiferraw, 1991, p. 33) and the Father of Peace for bringing North and South Sudan together. However, by the late 1960s and early 1970s, his government could not address the issue of growing poverty and economic inequalities in the country. Part of the reason for this was that he was an aging king, in his 80s, unwilling to pass his reign to his heir. The administrative bureaucracy was also unable to bring economic and political growth palatable to the young generation. Among other things, this created political movements and upheavals particularly among students and intellectuals with a slogan "Land to the Tillers" which reached its peak when
the 1973 famine claimed the lives of thousands of people. It was during this time that people from almost every walk of life such as students, teachers, taxi-drivers and others stepped into the political arena. As the government became weaker and weaker, the military came onto the scene. A committee consisting of 120 representatives of the police and the armed forces from various levels and ethnic groups was formed. This Committee was known as "Derge". Since there was no other organized political party to assume power at that time, many people welcomed the military; however, instead of bringing peaceful economic and social change to the country, the military and its advisors opted for a bloody revolution. To start with, the Committee (Derge) put Haile Selassie under house arrest and killed sixty ministers and highly educated government officials without any due process of law. The Military regime started ruling Ethiopia with an iron fist. To the shock and the dismay of the people of Ethiopia, Haile Selassie, who was considered as a symbol of peace not only for Ethiopia but also for Africa, was put to death in November 1974. People who loved and respected the King so much were denied of the right to openly mourn his death.

Soon opposition groups such as EPRP (Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party) consisting of university students and intellectuals, EDU (Ethiopian Democratic Union) consisting of former government supporters and many other groups emerged and started underground movements. Side by side, a series of wars with separatist groups in Northern Ethiopia took the lives of many Ethiopians.

All the opposition groups and their sympathizers were labelled as "anti-revolutionary" by the military government. Particularly, the EPRP's killings of government officials and their anti-government literature which was distributed and posted in many areas of cities
and towns infuriated the government. So in November, 1977, the government launched a campaign known as “Red Terror” and to the dismay of the Ethiopian people, it instructed its agents/cadres to imprison, torture and if necessary kill anyone who was thought to be “anti-revolutionary”. In fact, cadres were sent to the former Soviet Union and East Germany to be trained on how to torture political prisoners, called “anti-revolutionaries”. Some of the torture included such horrifying things like beating the bottom of one’s feet and palms with electric cables, cutting off hands and legs, taking out eyes, pulling out fingernails, putting people with tied hands and legs onto trucks and dumping them in big river gorges, digging mass graves and burying people alive (Teshale, 1991).

I was one of the fortunate ones who did not experience imprisonment or torture directly. But that did not mean that I was free of the constant fear for my life and the life of my relatives and others. In fact, for no reason one of my brothers and other relatives were imprisoned and tortured. That was not an easy matter to handle. Furthermore, there were many horrifying and emotionally torturing circumstances to be seen and known. For example, at one time, I saw piles of dead bodies in a hospital room where relatives and friends stood in line to buy the dead bodies of their loved ones from the government as they were expected to pay for the bullets that the government had used to kill. I also know of a case where a girl escaped from a mass killing and disguised herself as deaf and dumb and looked after cattle and sheep in a farmer’s house in one of the remote parts of Ethiopia for over four years. I have also witnessed the suffering and heard the cry of my own aunt whose fourteen-year-old son was shot at the entrance of her home and then was denied the right to cry for her killed son. Most of the parents in this study escaped from such chaos and atrocities.
If anyone, young or old, was found to have read anti-government literature or was suspected to believe in it, s/he would be tortured to the point of death. Children as young as ten years old were shot for holding anti-government literature (Teshale, 1991). In a country where parents and elders are highly respected, children and youth were brainwashed to spy on their own parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters and other relatives. In the middle of such chaos and atrocities, whether one is innocent or not, the possibility of being imprisoned or killed was an every-day occurrence that created horror. People were compelled to leave their home and homeland. In fact, the great majority of Ethiopians who were either killed or left their country due to political upheavals were educated. This was a great loss to a poor country like Ethiopia. An exodus which had never been seen before in the history of Ethiopia began. This exodus meant that Ethiopia was “among the top ten refugee producing countries in the world” (Kaprielian-Churchill & Churchill, 1994). Thousands of men and women, mostly highly educated professionals and students, managed to disguise themselves as peasants and went through incredible hardships to reach refugee camps in neighbouring countries such as Sudan, Kenya and Djibouti. Thousands of other men and women who ventured on this journey perished in the deserts, forests, mountains, gorges and rivers due to heat, floods, snake bites, hunger, thirst, rape, abduction and killing by nomadic people. A narrative of one of the participants in this study portrays some of the features of this journey:

You know, when you look up you see the sky and when you look down you see the sand. You don’t even know where you are going and what you are doing. You could easily come across nomadic people who would kill men and take women as wives. You could be surrounded by so many life-threatening animals like lions, tigers and hyenas. You can be hit by harsh weather like scary wind, thunder or deadly heat. You can also go on hungry for days with little food to eat and no water to drink or wash. Your feet could be swollen full of pain and unable to walk. Many of our fellow Ethiopians couldn’t make it through. Thanks God, I made it through.... (Mother Lemlem, July, 1999)
Although thousands of Ethiopians perished on this horrible journey, in 1989, there were over one million Ethiopian refugees in Sudan alone (Mohmoudi, 1992). These were the fortunate ones. Many parents in this study, therefore, are among those who managed to overcome this hazardous journey, reached refugee camps in neighbouring countries such as Kenya, Sudan and Djibouti and then emigrated to Canada. However, life in refugee camps was not easy. Once basic needs such as food, water, clothing, lodging and medicine were met, the effect of trauma and loss of family, home, homeland and culture started to overpower refugee’s thinking in the refugee camps (Kaprielian-Churchill & Churchill, 1994). Furthermore, “confinement, artificiality of daily life, overcrowding, lack of privacy, feeling of insecurity, boredom, an awareness of dependence and overwhelming sense of futility” (Kaprielian-Churchill & Churchill, 1994, p. 14) are some of the features of life in refugee camps. A participant’s narrative on his life in a refugee camp may indicate some of these facts:

My first priority was to save my life. Thanks God, my life was saved. But soon other problems started to overshadow my life. Apart from the inconvenient nature of the camp, there were so many things to worry about. You know, I missed my home, my family, my close friends, my country, my job, my status and my culture. Often times, I even felt guilty for leaving all these things behind me. I also pondered if it would have been better to die rather than to carry the burden of so much guilt with no future to see. Particularly, in the first few months of my life in the camp, it was very difficult for me to perceive any light in my future. But when I learned the possibility of leaving the camp and going to other countries like Canada and U.S., I came across a light of hope that filled me with determination and energy to move forward. Finally, my dream of leaving that refugee camp came true when I was given the opportunity of coming to Canada. (Father, Mesfin, June, 1999)

Many Ethiopian refugees emigrated to Europe, United States, Canada and Australia where they could start a new life and Canada was well known for its generosity for offering a “safe haven” (Troper, 1995) for refugees. As Troper (1995, p. 1) writes, “in
recent years Canada led the Western Nations in offering a safe haven to those who require it”. In fact, “in 1986 the Canadian people were awarded the Nansen Medal for their outstanding services to refugees” (Kaprielian-Churchill & Churchill, 1994, p. 1). All the parents in this study expressed how thankful they are to the government and people of Canada not only for giving them the opportunity of starting a new life but also for enabling them to live in a country where one can express what s/he feels whether s/he is listened to or not. For them the right for self-expression is very important because most of the suffering in Ethiopia occurred due to lack of the right to express one’s opinion. In fact, almost all of the parents stated that as the result of the political hazards, particularly, the military government’s campaign of “red terror” and the resultant experiences as refugees in neighbouring countries, one of the things that they value most for their children is the issue of peace, human rights, equality and democracy in a society. The question one might raise at this point: is the situation in Ethiopia better at present? I believe that the answer is “no” because the killings and the atrocities still exist, although in different forms. People still lack peace, human rights, equality and democracy. A case in point is the 2001 killings of 30 university students and the arrest of a seventy one year old professor who was the former head of the Ethiopian Human Right Council (http://news.bbc.uk/hi/english/world/africa/newsid, May 9, 2001). And the exodus continues.

As Kaprielian-Churchill & Churchill(1994) write, in spite of the overwhelming odds they face, refugees do have the stamina to “regain self-respect and personal identity”. Many do have the ability to draw hope, strength, courage, resilience, and determination not only to have “order and structure” in their lives but also to maintain their identity,
integrity, culture and to work hard to fulfil their own and their family's needs
(Kaprielian-Churchill & Churchill, 1994; Moussa, 1992). This is one of the things that I
was also able to observe in the life of the Ethiopian first generation immigrant parents
who participated in this study. These parents not only want their children to cope with
the culture, the language and the ways of life in their new country, Canada, but also they
want their children to retain and revitalize the culture and the languages of their home
country, Ethiopia. The question is how to support these families in their efforts to pass
their language and culture to their children?

2.6. INDIGENOUS CHILD-REARING
PRACTICE IN ETHIOPIA

Child-rearing practices are influenced by the history, politics, culture, religions, beliefs
and attitude of the people of a particular country or place. So "parental decision making
and perception about the educational experiences of young children cannot be considered
independent of the cultural context within which families understand child-rearing and
child development" (Johnson, Dyanda-Maria & Dzvimbo, 1997, p. 199). Culture
influences the conception of knowledge and in turn the conception of child rearing and
development (Spodek & Saracho, 1996). The unique cultures of Ethiopian Orthodox
Christianity and Islam have a strong influence on child-rearing practices in Ethiopia. For
Muslims, the rules and the rituals of the Islamic faith play a great role in the upbringing of
Islam children. In the same way, for Christian Ethiopians, the rules and the rituals of the
Orthodox Christian faith have a great influence on child-rearing practices. For example,
Ullendorff (1968) writes that watching Ethiopian children washing the feet of their
father's guests can make a person who is familiar with the Bible think of the similar scene
of Jesus washing the feet of his guests. Yes, in many parts of rural Ethiopia and in some cases in cities too, children are expected to wash the feet of their parents, their elders and guests. As this is considered as a sign of discipline and respect to God, many children practise it joyfully to express courtesy to their parents, elders and guests. Next to God, parents are respected as creators and respect to parents is taught very early in life. The sacred rituals associated with the Arc of the Covenant (Tabot as it is known in Ethiopia) have been used by Ethiopian parents to instil disciplinary values, ethics and spirituality that they think are appropriate for their children. In fact, the first organization that the Ethiopian immigrants established in Toronto was the Church where they place the replica of the Arc of the Covenant. The role the Church plays in raising their children is indicated in Chapter Five.

Among Ethiopian indigenous peoples, the importance of early years is highly stressed for character formation. Ethiopians believe that if a person is to have acceptable behaviour which goes with the norms and the beliefs of the society, s/he should be trained while s/he is still being breast-fed. According to the centuries old tradition of Ethiopians, a child is breast-fed until s/he is at least two years old and there is not any specially designated place for breast-feeding. A mother can breast-feed her baby any time anywhere, whether in public or private. As in many other parts of Africa (Dei, 1994), people in Ethiopia believe that the breast is a natural gift for children and is in no way related to sex. In other words, the breast does not belong to anybody else except as a source of milk for the child.

As in many indigenous African societies, in Ethiopia children are the gift of God. They are seen as joy, comfort, strength and blessing or grace from the Creator, God
(Tedla, 1995). The more children a person has, the more status s/he has as a parent. Having a large number of children enhances the parents' self-esteem and hope for life. It is said that 'the panacea for death is to have children'. Children are desirable because they are useful in the home, in the neighbourhood, in communities and in the farm areas. Moreover, as grown ups, children assume responsibilities to take care of their old parents and other extended family members. In such societies, where there is no such thing as government welfare or support, children are the source of support and security. From the beginning, children know that they are the ones who will be taking care of their parents during their old age and parents know and expect that their future is in the hands of their children. Explaining the role of rural African children, Disasa (1987, p. 87) writes, "from the start they (children) are considered to be producers, not mere consumers. Starting from birth they give the parents the honour of being referred to as the father of X or the mother of X, X being the name of the child, as opposed to being addressed by their own names. Such reference is no less important than merit. It promotes the social status and credibility of the parents".

In Ethiopia, as in many African countries, children are considered as children of the whole community and each member of the community looks at what a child says and does to make her/him part of the community. As each community member is keen to look at a child's movement in a community, the child is also careful not to deviate from the community's expectation. The childcare system is based on multiple caregivers and shared responsibilities among many families and community members. In other words, more people take an interest in children so that parents receive more child-rearing help from relatives, neighbours and friends. Parents and other family members, consciously or
unconsciously educate their children in the home environments so that children will be skilled enough to cope with the way of life in their community. Much of the knowledge, skills and virtues are learned in the home environment. In most of rural Ethiopia, "the home is the center of or heart of traditional learning. It is here that the child begins and ends his/her journey to becoming a true person. The family which consists of parents, children, grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins make up the corps of dedicated teachers" (Tedla, 1995, p. 152).

According to the traditional beliefs of Ethiopians, the growth of a young child is compared to that of a tree. It is stressed that once a twig is bent when the tree is tender, it is always difficult to make it straight. In the same way, once a child is spoiled at an early age, it is very difficult to make her/him behave in a manner that is acceptable by the society where she/he belongs. So at this tender age, parents and other family members work hard to instil in their young children's minds things that they believe are important such as: collective life styles, interdependence, cooperation, obedience, concern for others, compliance and respect for authority, family harmony, remorse, empathy, forgiveness, self-discipline, love towards the extended family and other people, close physical and emotional proximity to parents, faith in God, respect for parents and elders, truthfulness, patriotic feelings, norms, rules and regulations of society. Particularly in rural areas where there are no schools or mass media like television, children easily take in what their parents and other family members tell them or what their family members think is valuable or important. As there are no external forces to push or pull children to expose themselves to values, beliefs and behaviours which are unacceptable to their parents and other family members, except in extreme and abnormal cases, children are
ready to fulfil society's expectations in general and the expectations of their family in particular. This situation creates harmony not only between the children and their parents, but also between the children and their extended family and the people in their community. The existence of conflicts between parents and children is almost never heard of as children always comply with their parents' wishes. However, in many cases, particularly in the presence of their parents, children are not allowed to ask questions and express their views. Instead, they are expected to be quiet, shy and unquestioningly obedient (Wagaw, 1979). Furthermore, parents express little overt affection to their older children though they show open and warm affection and intimacy to young infants.

The meaning given to children's behaviours depends on the beliefs and the culture of the society where the child belongs because "the context of all education is culturally defined... in terms of how each society defines the ideas of truth, virtue and beauty" (Spodek, 1991, p. 4). For example, "inconsistent with the Western literature in which shy-inhibited behaviour has been considered socially incompetent, immature, and maladaptive, shyness-social inhibition is positively evaluated, reflecting social maturity and understanding in Chinese culture" (Chen, Dong, Zhou, 1997, p. 858). The same is true in Ethiopian society. Shyness, particularly in a girl, is considered as part of her beauty and is not considered as immaturity or mal-adaptiveness. In contrast, assertiveness and autonomy in children is considered inappropriate because parents believe that a child's assertiveness and autonomy will disrupt the harmony between them and their children. For many Ethiopian parents absolute obedience to parents, elders and people of high status is a valuable virtue. Conformity and acceptance of group goals are appreciated as opposed to individualism and independence in the Western culture.
Unlike children in Western culture, children in Ethiopia are not expected to talk about their achievements or successes. If they do so, they are considered to be impolite and boastful. Instead, others talk about their achievements or successes where it is appropriate. The question is: does this have any implication in the life of first generation Ethiopian immigrants in here in Canada? Furthermore, how do first generation Ethiopian immigrant parents who were familiar with cultural child-rearing practices in their country of origin, rear or wish to rear their children in Canadian society where children's assertiveness and autonomy is highly valued? As the narratives of the parents show, the parents strongly believe that they want their children to be both Canadians and Ethiopians. In fact, as some of them put it, they want their children to have “dual identity”. The study shows that, among other things, the children’s experiences were influenced by their parents’ experiences both in their country of origin, Ethiopia and in their new country, Canada. For example, inconsistent with Canadian culture, they want their children to be assertive and inconsistent with Ethiopian culture they want their children to give the utmost respect to parents and elderly people.

In Ethiopia, as in many parts of the world, physical punishment such as spanking is applied as a way of disciplining children when they show disrespect to adults' authority or do something unacceptable to the community. Emotional punishment such as insulting and saying things that hurt the child's feelings, however, are not acceptable and persons who hurt children's emotions are cursed. For this reason, parents prefer physical punishment to emotional punishment. For them, it is a method of preparing the child for life, that is a way of making the child cope with society. Therefore, parents who apply physical punishment like spanking and pinching children for the purpose of discipline are
not referred to as abusive and the child is not considered as abused. Regardless of the type of disciplinary measures the parents take, there is always respect and love toward each other and disputes between children and parents are rarely heard. I am not saying that physical punishment is a good way of disciplining children. I am also not saying that there are no parents who do not abuse their children knowingly or unknowingly. Instead, I am trying to show how the cultural beliefs and attitudes of societies and individuals shape how persons parent.

Apart from educating children in the home, in the neighbourhood and in the community, there are ancient traditional educational institutions where many children of parents from both Islamic and Christian faith are sent to be educated. Since I could not come across information about the traditional “Koran” schools or Islamic schools, my explanation about traditional education in Ethiopia, revolve around the Ethiopian Orthodox Christian Church’s education. It is my interest to look at both the Christian and Islamic traditional education in Ethiopia in future research.

As Alemayyehw (1969) writes, traditional education in Ethiopia can be traced as far back as 1000 B.C. The traditional church school was started in 327 A. D. with the establishment of the church itself (Pankhurst, 1955). For more than sixteen hundred years, the church schools in Ethiopia assumed the responsibility of education for children and adults alike (Wagaw, 1979). Until recent times, these Church schools remained the sole reservoir from which the military, civil and religious leaders as well as scribes and scholars were drawn (Pankhurst, 1955). In fact, Pankhurst (1955) emphasized that the church schools are the main guardian of Ethiopian scripts and the principal creator of literature.
These traditional Christian church schools have various levels of education. The first level can probably be compared to primary school. It is usually run by a single priest or lay clergy. The next level which could be compared to secondary schools or in some cases to universities, are more advanced and are run by a number of learned priests, monks and their disciples. These schools are usually established around big monasteries and churches. Girls are not allowed to attend these schools. So from time immemorial many boys as young as seven from rural areas and from small towns are sent to far places to attend such church schools. From the time these boys start attending such schools, they wear special uniforms, cloaks made of goatskins or hide so that people will know that they are students of traditional church schools. The students are referred as *Yekolo Temari* (student of church school). They usually live far away from their parents and probably see their parents once a year or once in every two years. Although such education is free, the students are responsible for their own shelter and food. The students collectively make shelter around the church schools. The older students help the younger ones in building shelters and in many ways they live in groups. While one of the group members might act as a leader and coordinate others, everybody else is expected to contribute. The children take turns in the kinds of jobs they do. Some are responsible for collecting food from members of the community around the schools or from community that may be far from the schools; some are responsible for collecting firewood; some are responsible for fetching water and others are responsible for cooking. In other words, there is division of labour. Although life is demanding, these children learn at a tender age how to be responsible. Community members also cooperate in providing food and other items to such students. They do willingly because it is part of their culture.
Although it is not called "scholarship", in a way the assistance that the community members provide to the traditional students is like a scholarship.

This education takes a long time. In fact, if a person wants to become a knowledgeable priest or a well-versed churchman, he probably needs to attend school for more than twenty years. The curriculum of the church schools revolves around religious issues. The liturgical dances and songs which were composed by an Ethiopian priest named Yared, who lived in the 600 A.D. and who later was designated as one of the saints in Ethiopia, is a major part of the curriculum. Almost all priests, high priests, patriarchs and others who give service in the Ethiopian Orthodox church have passed through this system of education.

There are also what are known as "priest schools" and "Koran/Quran schools" where children as young as four years attend. Priest schools may be started by a single priest in a compound of a church or a private home. They also may be started in settings as simple as under the shade of trees. The usual entry age to such traditional priest schools ranges from four to seven years. Such traditional priest schools existed in Ethiopia since the Church itself was established in the fourth century A. D. (Ayano, 1993; Gebrewold, 1990). Although not in the strict Western sense, early childhood education in Ethiopia has existed from time immemorial. With this tradition, many Ethiopian parents believe that children should start schooling at age four. Many Ethiopian parents believe that if children start learning Geez and Amharic syllabaries just after their fourth birthday, they will continue to learn with ease. Even today in Ethiopia, parents from many rural areas, towns and big cities, send their children to such schools. In fact, the number of traditional priest schools is larger than the number of what are known as “modern” early childhood
education and care settings in the Western sense. For example, in 1982 in Addis Ababa, the capital city of Ethiopia, there were 334 priest schools with 29,185 children attending whereas there were only 84 early childhood education and care settings with 11,110 children (Wubie, 1983).

The emphasis in the curriculum of priest schools is on reading and writing. Since many Ethiopian parents like to see their children read and write within a short time as they do in the priest schools, activities emphasized in the conventional ECES such as role playing, painting, drawing and excursion, are less appreciated by them. In spite of the explanation about the objectives of education in the conventional ECES that early childhood educators tried to provide, Ethiopian parents would like to see more reading and writing activities in early childhood settings.

I believe that societies' concerns and parents' concerns (Dei, 1993) must be accommodated in the educational process. It was in response to many parents' demand for reading and writing materials that I started writing a series of children's books entitled "Letters Through Stories in Kindergartens" (Wubie, 1984a) while I was working as an early childhood education and care curriculum developer in the Ministry of Education in Ethiopia. The objective of the books was to teach kindergarten children the 231 Amharic and Geez syllabaries through stories of interest to children.

Since most of the parents in this study attended priests' schools where reading and writing were the core of the curriculum, many of them want their children to read and write early.
CHAPTER THREE
3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3. 1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter has six sections. The first section introduces the contents of the chapter. In the second section, literature related to some aspects of early childhood education and care programs including its definitions, the roots of its theories and the reasons behind its increasing demand is reviewed. Also the issue of accommodating the needs of children and families from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds in terms of teacher preparation, curriculum design and production of resource materials is highlighted. The third section reviews some literature related to home as an educational institution, parents as teachers and the importance of home and ECES partnership in enhancing positive children’s experiences of education and care.

Section Four deals with previous studies on experiences of children. Although I could not find previous studies that looked at the experiences of children of first generation immigrant families at home and at ECES simultaneously, studies that looked at experiences of children in both settings with regard to conversation, discipline, cognitive development, social behaviour and general development outcomes are reviewed. Furthermore, the impact of parent-teacher relationships on the experiences of children in general and the experiences of children of diverse cultures, languages and races in particular is also discussed. Section Five reviews previous studies of immigrant children and their parents.

I believe that studying issues related to early childhood education without
understanding theories of child development is similar to building a house without a base or a foundation. “Early childhood education has always had a close relationship to the study of child development” (York, 1991, p. 12). Therefore, Section Six of this chapter reviews literature related to some aspects of the traditional theories of child development. Since “young children are more context dependent and context vulnerable than older children and adults” (Graue & Walsh, 1995, p. 139), a large portion of this section emphasizes literature related to “child development in contexts”.

3.2. SOME ASPECTS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE PROGRAMS

The phrase “early childhood education and care” denotes the education and care provided to children in settings such as nursery schools, creche, infant schools, family home day care, preschools, play schools, day-cares, kindergartens and lower primary grades (Fromberg & Williams, 1992; Woodwill, 1992). The definitions, the organizational arrangements, the education and the care provided in each setting vary from country to country. However, there is a considerable agreement among many countries in the world in defining early childhood education and care as “the education and care of children from birth to eight years” (Fromberg & Williams, 1992; Mincey, 1982; Regan, 1978; Woodwill, 1992). In addition, Canadian early childhood education and care includes “school-age” daycare programs (Biemiller, Regan & Lero, 1992). As in other countries, this field is diversified as evidenced in the different vocabularies such as nursery schools, preschools, day cares and kindergartens (Prochner & Howe, 2000). The general phrase that encompasses all these terms is “early childhood education and care settings” and that is why I used this phrase even though the six educational and care
institutions I used for this particular study are day-cares.

Many contemporary theories and practices of early childhood education and care are not brand new in North America (Wood, 1988). Many theories, objectives, program content, methods and organizations of early childhood education and care are rooted in the works of early thinkers, educators and philosophers, mainly from the continent of Europe (Prochner, 2000). But it is my belief that there were people in other parts of the world who had theories and ideas about children’s upbringing, care, education and development. Each society has its own indigenous cultural beliefs, philosophies and ideas on the raising and education of children (Dei, 1994; Nsmenang, 1992; LeVine, 1977). For example, as indicated earlier, the recognition that the early years are important in the development of the child in general and in her/his character formation in particular was present among many indigenous people of Ethiopia over many centuries. Similarly, many indigenous people in other parts of Africa, Asia, America, and Australia have their own theories, ideas and philosophies as to how to rear, educate and discipline children. The difference is that, in Europe, the early histories and philosophies of childhood education and care were written and documented whereas in many other parts the world they were not documented (Nsmenang, 1992). So the argument can be made that these documented ideas and philosophies did have an impact on the literature of present day early childhood education and care which, in turn, was reflected in theories and practice.

The child-centred orientation can be traced back to the idea of Comenius, Rousseau and Pestalozi, while the society centred orientation emanates from the ideas of Aristotle (and) Calvin...”(Eisner & Vallance, 1974, p. 3). In ancient Greece, Plato raised the
importance of play in young children’s education and suggested that they should learn by amusement rather than by the use of force (Howe, 2000; Lancaster & Gruant, 1976; Pluckrose, 1975). In the present world too, it is unusual to speak about early childhood education teaching/learning strategies without considering play as an avenue of learning (Saracho, 1991). “Play is a natural and necessary medium for the internalization of values and for the construction of concepts and relationships [It] is a means of discovering one’s own identity, relating to others, understanding others’ viewpoints, learning to use symbols in thinking and internalizing the ways of the society through imitating adults’ role and situations”(King, Chipman & Cruz-Janzen, 1994, p. 44).

Comenius (1592-1670) a Czech educator, stressed the role of the parents in teaching their own children and designed a program for mothers to use in the home. In the present day too, parents are considered crucial in promoting children’s education and care (Hill, 1989; Levenstein, 1988). Rousseau (1712-1778) insisted that teachers should act as initiators not as dictators (Mallinson, 1977). What this means is that teachers should not consider themselves as the only source of knowledge telling students what to do and what to know. They should also initiate students to participate and contribute to the teaching learning process. In today’s world too, many insist that teachers should play the role of guiding, facilitating, “scaffolding” (Palincsar, 1986; Pressely, 1996) and the role of promoting “constructivism” (Harris & Graham, 1996; Kafai & Resnick, 1996) instead of being direct transmitters of knowledge. Froebel (1782-1852) who was known as the father of kindergarten education and who was considered “the originator of early childhood education as a distinct field of pedagogy”(Elkind, 1991, p. 11) insisted upon the relevance of education to real life (Auleta, 1969). Designing education that has relevance to real
lives is one of the issues with which the present educators, psychologists, sociologists and others struggle. So, as many writers indicate, theories and practices of early childhood education have been influenced by the thoughts of early educators, philosophers, politicians and thinkers.

Whatever the theories and the practices are, early childhood education and care programs are in high demand in many parts of the world. There are three major reasons which have become a driving force for the ever increasing demand for early childhood education and care programs. The first one is the long standing belief that the early childhood period is one during which the foundation of a person's life is laid and the need for proper care and education of children from their early years (Hall & Kon, 1992; Prochnor, 2000; York, 1991). What this means is that what one invests for the proper care and education of young children becomes a great asset for future society. The second factor that creates a great demand for early childhood education and care programs is the rapid growth of women's employment out of home sectors (Clarke-Stewart, Gruber & Fitzgerald, 1994; Howe, 2000; York, 1991). The third factor is the belief that early childhood education will compensate what children from low socio-economic background lack in their homes due to economic and social problems. For example, one of the major reasons for promoting the Head Start Program in the U. S. has to do with providing the children with what they lack at home. These three factors have played a major role in the establishment of various types of early childhood education and care programs such as nursery schools, infant schools, family day care, day-cares and kindergartens. Particularly, the rise of women's employment coupled with the feminist movement has played a major role in increasing societies' demands for early childhood
education and care. For example, as Clarke-Stewart, Gruber & Fitzgerald (1994) write, the level of 60% women's employment in United States has led to the establishment of numerous early childhood education and care programs which, in turn, has led to changes in early experiences of children. In Canada also, the employment of women is increasing rapidly. In fact, as Howe, (2000, p. 302) writes "currently, more young women than men take post-secondary education" suggesting more employment of women than ever before which results in a high demand for early childhood education and care programs. Howe (2000) also added that the increase in the number of single parent families has also played a role in making early childhood education and care programs an important feature of Canadian society.

The influx of immigrants and refugees over the past years indicates that Canada is a country of many cultures and languages. In fact, as Biemiller, Regan, & Lero (1992, p. 150) write "more than one-half of the children entering the Toronto and Vancouver school system... come from families whose native language is neither English nor French". The issue is not only one of increasing the number of early childhood education and care programs to meet the high demand of societies. It is also one of preparing teachers, designing curriculum and producing appropriate resource materials that could accommodate the needs of children and families from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

The issue of preparing early childhood education teachers so that they could effectively deal with children and families from diverse cultures and languages is crucial in a multicultural society such as Canada (Bernhard, 1995). The place teachers have in society, their economic and social status could also play a role in the nature, the
care and education they provide to children; however, as in many other parts of the world, the status of early childhood education teachers, particularly teachers in daycare, is very low. While numerous writers in the literature emphasize the crucial nature of the early childhood period in a person's life and the role that quality early childhood education and care plays in the development of children, in many countries, teachers who are teaching and caring for children at this level, face a crisis in their status. Regan (1987:2) has articulated this issue well: “one of the few fairly reliable generalizations about the field of pre-primary education and its teachers is that the younger the child being taught, the less status and prestige enjoyed, the fewer the qualifications are required, the lower the wages, and the longer hours of work”.

The wages of daycare teachers in Canada are “below the wage of supermarket clerks... [that] result in high staff turnover and recruitment of low level staff” (Biemiller, Regan & Lero, 1992, p. 151). In fact, all the six teachers in this study believe that early childhood education teachers, particularly teachers who care and teach children in day-cares are the most marginalised teachers in Canada. They seriously contemplated the fact that they are not only paid very low wages as compared to other teachers but also they are not considered as teachers but as “baby sitters” both by many parents and members of society. They stress that they lack the necessary respect and economic well-being. Particularly, teachers who work in day-cares attached to schools feel that they have no relationships with other teachers since they do not have equal status. For example, one of the teachers expressed her feeling: “working in school, I really feel that the teachers and the day-care teachers have no relationships. You know, the low status and payment we have created a gap between us and other teachers. I mean it is classist”. This teacher's idea is consistent
with what Biemiller, Regan & Lero (1992) write. According to these authors, the low wages of daycare teachers lead to problems of status which, in turn, create differences between daycare teachers and other teachers. The point that I would like to emphasize here is that researchers agree that early childhood education teachers have very low status and wages (Regan, 1987; Biemiller, Regan & Lero, 1992; Wubie, 1993). I did not find a study that investigates the relationship of low status and low wages of early childhood education teachers and the quality of their work. I believe that the question of low status and wages of daycare teachers and its relationship to the quality of their demanding work of dealing with children is an area that needs more attention.

3.3. THE HOME AS AN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION

When many of us think of school, the first thing that comes to our mind is a four walled classroom with students, designated curriculum and trained teachers. The notion that the process of learning/teaching takes place in other settings such as the home, the church, the mosque, the community, the streets and within peer groups seldom comes to our mind. I believe that the learning/teaching process takes place everywhere with no boundaries of space, time, age, race, culture and level of technological, social and economic development. Children learn and unlearn by interacting with people and “natural and built environments” (Hutchison, 1998) in their surroundings. The learning/teaching process that takes place in the child’s surroundings can facilitate or impede the implementation of curriculum and classroom practice in school settings. The “strength and the limitations of the school curriculum have to be seen within this context” (Hawes, 1979, p. 2).
The home is the first institution where the process of education starts. In fact, the premise that education starts the moment a child is born (Hall & Kon, 1992; King, Chipman & Cruz-Janzen, 1994; Mellor, 1966; Montessori, 1970; 1973) provides strength to the argument that the home is the first educational institution and the parents are the first educators and caretakers of their children. As Montessori (1973, p. 4) put it “the greatness of the human personality begins at the hour of birth”. It is at this moment that a child starts her/his work to survive and to be a member of a society. Education starts right from birth, if not before. In fact, some psychologists and educators advise pregnant women to nurture their unborn children with soft music and reading in a pleasant, low voice so that the child in the womb becomes accustomed to comfortable tones. Early childhood is the foundation of the adult’s life. More of children’s early years is spent in the home environment making the home and the parents even more crucial as far as early education, care and socialization are concerned. “Except in extreme cases of neglect and mistreatment at home, it is hard to conceive of an institution alternative to the home and the family” (Educational Policies Commission of the National Education, 1969:50). The early experience of the mother-infant interaction, which is the primary basis of cognitive, social, emotional, physical and linguistic development mainly takes place in the home environment (Corsini, 1984; Schaffer, 1977; Wacbs & Gruen, 1982). So similar to the school, the home is a powerful educational institution and a resource center for social, cognitive, linguistic and cultural development (Andrews, Blumenthal, Johnson, Kohn, Ferguson, Laster, Malone & Wallace, 1982; Auerbach, 1968; Becher, 1986; Bradely, Goldwell, & Rock, 1988; Hurst, 1987; Levenstein, 1988; Schaefer, 1972; Simons, Whitefield & Layton, 1980).
Both the home and early childhood education and care setting are education and care providing institutions; however, as Epstein (1996, p. 210) puts it "... neither schools [in this case, ECES] nor families alone can do the job of educating and socializing children and preparing them for life. Rather, schools, families and communities share responsibilities for children and influence them simultaneously". The shared responsibility among schools, families and communities is associated with better outcomes for children's success in school (Dei, Jame-Wilson, Krumanchery & Zine, 2000; Zill, 1996). When the home and the school form partnerships, "the school becomes a potent for the community in promoting healthy and holistic development among all children" (Haynes & Ben-Avie, 1996, p. 46). "Children's education can no longer be viewed as a one way-street where the school alone is responsible for children's learning. Rather, children's education should be viewed as a two-way-street where the home and the school take an active part in and are responsible for children's learning" (Sinclair, 1982, p. iv).

Often, what children do at home is reflected in what they do in ECECS. In other words, there is a relationship between children's experiences at home and in ECECS (Delgado-Gaitan, 1990; Goldenberg, 1993). For example, a child whose parents read stories to her/him is interested in listening and telling stories in ECECS. Similarly, a child who does a lot of drawing and painting in ECECS shows interest in drawing and painting at home. So there is a relationship between children's education at home and in ECES. As Bronfenbrenner (1986) writes, children's experiences at home influence their experiences in school and vice versa. This view is reflected in the analysis in chapter six and seven. Since children's education is a two-way-street, it is important to look at the
experiences of children both at home and at school. That is what this study is doing. As indicated earlier, it explores the experiences of children of Ethiopian first generation Ethiopian immigrant parents both in their homes and in their ECES because I strongly believe that the home is also an early childhood education and care setting.

3.4. PREVIOUS STUDIES ON CHILDREN’S EXPERIENCES

From the time of the conceptualization of this study, I searched for studies that looked at the experiences of children of first generation Ethiopian immigrant parents at home and in ECES. I did not find any. For this reason, I may safely claim that this study is the first of its type and nature in dealing with the experience of children of first generation Ethiopian immigrant parents. In general, as Clarke-Stewart, Guber & Fitzgerald (1994, p. 4) write, “researchers have not studied the correspondence between children’s experiences at home and in daycare”. Shpancer (1997, p. 16) also writes that studies on “children’s day-care and home experiences are relatively scarce” since many of the studies are focussed on out-of-the home care and education. In fact, as indicated earlier, one of the areas that makes this study different from many of the previous studies is its emphasis on examining the correspondence of the children’s experiences at home and at ECECS. The other departure of this study from many of the previous studies on children’s experiences is the conceptualization of looking at the children’s cultural and linguistic experiences at home and in ECES through the perspectives of their parents and their teachers at five points in time: a) before the children started attending ECES, pre-early childhood education settings experiences; b) during their transition from home to ECES, transitional experiences; c) during their adjustment at ECES, adjustment
experiences; d) during their post adjustment experiences at home; and e) during their post-adjustment period at ECES.

However, although I did not find studies that looked at children of first generation immigrant parents at home and at ECES as conceptualized in this study, various investigations have been conducted on the influence of the home and ECES on the development of children (Clarke-Stewart, Gruber & Fitzgerald, 1994). Researchers have looked at differences in the experiences of children at home and in ECES. Such studies revolve around experiences of children with regard to conversation, discipline, developmental outcomes: cognitive and social development and parent-teacher relationship and its impact on the care and education of children. This section of the present study gives an overview of some of the findings of previous research studies on these issues and other related topics.

Analysing conversations between adults and children at home and at ECES, researchers have found that pre-school age children in ECES converse/communicate more with other children than with adults, that is teachers or other staff, while the opposite is true in the home environments (Rubenstein & Howes, 1979; Tizard, Camichael, Hughes & Pinkerton, 1980). Other studies show that in homes where there are siblings, preschool children converse and play more with each other than they do with their parents or other adults (Clarke-Stewart, Gruber & Fitzgerald, 1994). This suggests that whether it is in the home or in ECES, preschool age children communicate more with each other than they do with adults unless the home is a one child home.

Other researchers looked at the methods of teaching and disciplining at home and at ECES and found that early childhood education teachers were less restrictive, less
critical and less authoritarian and used play and games as an avenue for teaching/learning as compared to parents’ ways of teaching and disciplining at home (Cochran, 1979; Hess, Price, Dickson & Conroy, 1981). However, it is important to consider the attitudes, values, education, training, orientations and cultural backgrounds of both parents and early childhood education teachers as they differ in the way they discipline or teach.

Other researchers looked at the developmental outcomes of children with ECES experiences and children without ECES experiences. From such studies, children with ECES experiences in their preschool years have been found to have advanced cognitive and language development as compared to children without ECES experiences (Cryan, Sheehan, Wiechel, & Bandy-Hedden, 1992; Garber & Hodge, 1989; Gullo & Burton, 1992; Hayes, Palmer & Zaslow 1990; Phillips, McCartney & Scarr, 1987). They were also found to have more self-confidence, to be more assertive and articulate in the way they speak (Corsini, 1977; Flower, 1978; Moskowitz, Schwarz & Lally & Honig, 1977).

On the other hand, studies show that although children with ECES experiences in their preschool years are assertive and more independent as compared to children who stay in their home during this period, “sometimes they are less polite, compliant and agreeable with their mother’s or caregiver’s requests; louder and more boisterous, more irritable and rebellious... than children who have not been in daycare” (Clarke-Stewart, Gruber & Fitzgerald, 1994, p. 10). I think one has to be very cautious about such conclusions as there could be many children with no ECES experiences who are advanced in cognitive development with confidence and assertiveness. There could also be many children with experiences in ECES who are polite and compliant. I believe this question relates to contexts which the child encounters in the ECES or in the home settings. For example,
researchers have found that if children attend “quality ECES” with well “qualified
teachers” (Phillips, Scarr & McCartney, 1987), well designed “educational programs”
(Goelman & Pence, 1987), appropriate “children/teacher ratio”(Howes, 1983), well
equipped and systematically arranged “classroom settings”(Halloway & Reichart-Erikson,
1988), children develop a sense of sociability and become cooperative and self-
disciplined (Howes, 1990; Vandell, Henderson & Wilson, 1988). Similarly, homes with
“quality family care”, in terms of meeting the physical, emotional and psychological
needs of children, enhances children’s intellectual and social development (Bradely, 
Goldwell, & Rock, 1988; Clarke-Stewart, Guber & Fitzgerald, 1994).

Another area which has attracted many researchers in understanding the experiences of
children in ECES is looking at the “parent-teacher relationship” (Bernhard & Freire,
1996; Bernhard, Lefebvre, Chud & Lange, 1998; Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Edward, Logue, 
Loehr & Roth, 1986; Endsley, Minish & Zhou, 1993; Endsley, & Minish, 1991; 
Ghazvuni & Readdick, 1994; Hogan, Ispa & Thorburg, 1991; Howes, 1991; Powell, 
1989; Smith & Hubbard, 1988; Wilson, 1997). These researchers argue that a sound
relationship between teachers and parents has a positive impact on the
experience/development of young children. For example, Endsley & Minish (1991)
studied the interactions of parents and teachers and found that frequent and pleasant
interactions between parents and teachers were predictors of quality education and care
for children. Endsley, Mnish & Zhou (1993) also looked at the relationship of the
involvement of parents in ECES and the experiences of children and found that parents’
involvement encouraged by ECES was positively correlated with high quality education
and care of children in ECES. Smith & Hubbard (1988) investigated the relationship of
parent-teachers' interactions and its effects on children's behaviour in ECES. Their findings showed that children whose parents had a "warm and reciprocal communication with early childhood education teachers" tended to adjust better in ECES and to have more positive relationships with teachers and peers. A sound relationship between parents and teachers helps both teachers and parents to learn from each other (Cataldo & Salzer, 1982; Howes, 1987; Steinberg & Walker, 1982). For example, in their study on what parents could learn from their interaction with early childhood education teachers, Cataldo & Salzer (1982) showed how parents could observe reading strategies in ECES that helped them in their reading to their children at home. Furthermore, "caregiver-parent interaction may alter the child's home experience by providing parents with a source of social support" (Shpancer, 1997, p. 14). It also promotes parents' understanding and perception of early childhood education (Powell & Stremmel, 1997).

The question is: could there be problems between parents and teachers who are racially, culturally and linguistically different from each other that may affect their relationship? According to Bernhard, Lefebvre, Chud & Lange (1998, p. 5) the answer is "yes". In fact, Bernhard, Lefebvre, Chud & Lange (1998, p.5) looked at the "relationships between early childhood educators and minority parents" by interviewing 199 early childhood education teachers, 77 supervisors and 108 minority families in the Canadian cities of Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver. It is worth quoting some of their findings such as: "Schools and minority parents appeared to have substantial differences over what constitutes proper child-rearing methods in the home. The practices of minority parents were often viewed by teachers as lax; racial discriminatory incidents... were not uncommon in child care centers; ... Subtle and unintended effects of racism were much
more noticed by some parents than by many teachers" (Bernhard, Lefebvre, Chud & Lange, 1998, p. 5). Racism" (Shpancer, 1997) and "differences in values" and beliefs about child-rearing between parents and teachers (West, Hausken & Collins, 1993) affect parental involvement in ECES. When "parents' values are discounted" (Bernhard, Lefebvre, Chud & Lange (1998, p. 7), collaboration between teachers and parents would be at stake and this, in turn, affects children's experiences in terms of the care and the education they receive from ECES (Shpancer, 1997). "Language and cultural barriers (Chang, 1993) also hinders effective communication and partnership between parents and teachers. On the other hand, as the literature suggests, unless parents and teachers have "warm and reciprocal communication" (Smith & Hubbard, 1988) children's adjustment in ECES and their relationships with their teachers and peers would be affected negatively. So the issue of parent/teacher relationships as related to differences in values, attitudes, race, language and culture and the role it plays in the experiences of children should gain attention to alleviate barriers through mutual respect of each others' values, race, language and culture.

3.5. PREVIOUS STUDIES ON ISSUES OF IMMIGRANT CHILDREN AND THEIR PARENTS

Although studies on immigrant children at the early childhood education level were scarce in the sixties and seventies, a number of articles looked at the "educational achievement" of immigrant and refugee children at primary and secondary education levels. For example, many researchers in Germany, France, United States, United Kingdom, Israel, Sweden and Canada conducted tests of intelligence and aptitude of immigrant and non-immigrant students at primary and secondary school levels and
concluded that immigrant students' school achievement was low as compared to non-immigrants (see for example, Adler, 1969; Bhatnagar, 1976; Eysenck, 1971; Johannesson, 1973; Toronto Board of Education, 1965; Vernon, 1969). Many researchers also established the idea that "immigrant children, particularly from non-European, southern, or central European backgrounds tend to do worse than other groups on tests of intelligence and aptitude" (Bhatnagar, 1976, p.56). The issues that caused controversies were the causes behind differences in the school achievement of the immigrant and the non-immigrant children. Psychologists such as Jensen (1969) in the United States argued that differences on the intelligence tests of different ethnic groups were determined genetically. Surprisingly, Jensen (1969) published an article in Harvard Educational Review concluding that black students had lower intelligence due to genetic factors. His argument, however, was strenuously attacked by many psychologists and sociologists. Vernon (1969) for example, argues that the use of Western type intelligence tests for cross-cultural comparative purposes was a serious mistake since the definition of intelligence and child-rearing practices differ from culture to culture. Many researchers asserted that familiarity with the educational environment, length of stay in schools (Haynes, 1971), linguistic, cultural conflict and psychological barriers (Bhatnagar, 1976; Zerkel, 1972), "social acceptability" (Lederman, 1969) and power relationships (Dei, 1996; Ogbu, 1988) were among the main factors that made differences in the test performances of immigrant and non-immigrant students. Discussing the causes of lower academic achievement of immigrant students, Bhatnagar (1976, p. 66) writes that "values acquired through socialization in the home culture might stand in contrast with the values of the new culture" which make differences in the results of the achievement tests.
Gibson & Ogbo (1991, p. 4) also strongly argue that "discontinuities in culture, communication and power relations" are a major cause of immigrant students' low achievement. For Gibson and Ogbo (1991) and Dei (1996), the status of immigrant families in the society and power relations between them and school staff and between immigrant students and non-immigrant students were a strong contributing factor to the low school achievement of immigrant and minority students. Dei (1996) further argues that "the dynamic of social differences: race, ethnicity, class and gender" is a strong contributing factor to the low achievement of immigrant/minority students causing some of them to drop out of school.

In the mid-seventies, researchers in Canada indicated that the problem of immigrant students was related to conflicts between home culture and school culture and educators inability to comprehend the social or emotional problems of immigrant children (Ramcharan, 1975). Ramcharan (1975, p. 99) explains this finding thus: "the culture of the home and the community including the attitudes, values, styles of life and behavioural patterns the child learns in the family environment is totally alien to what he is presented within the school environment....the dilemma faced by the child is that the values of the school, the language of instruction and the school socialization process conflict with parental socialization". Ashworth's (1975, p. 54) national survey on the education of immigrant children in Canada also indicated that the low achievement of immigrant students was related to "value conflict" between their home culture and Canadian culture. Other aspects which contributed to the problem of immigrant students in Canada were found to be misunderstanding of the expectations of students and their parents by educators and unawareness of the Canadian educational and cultural system by the
immigrant students and their families (Wolfgang, 1975).

In spite of the identification of some of the causes of low achievement of immigrant students in the mid-seventies and earlier, these problems still exist. For example, a recent study on the situation of refugee students in Toronto public schools showed that many refugee students were in "disadvantaged positions academically" and their teachers did not feel their preparation was adequate enough to deal with the complicated needs of such students (Yao, 1995). This suggests that there is still a lot to be done by educators and other concerned government and non-government institutions in terms of policies, research and training of teachers and parents. Moreover, to promote academic success for culturally and linguistically diverse students, teachers' sensitivity and knowledge of the cultural backgrounds of the students and their parents is very important (Butterfield & Pepper, 1991).

However, it is important to note that in spite of the odds that immigrant students face in Canada many become successful in their school work and are able to graduate from higher educational institutions (Kaprielian-Churchill & Churchill, 1994). In the United States many immigrant students also become successful. For example, in California, Vernez & Abrahmse (1997) investigated the experiences and the performance of immigrant primary school age children and youth in comparison with the experience and the performance of native born children and youth and found that immigrant children and their families have higher aspirations for education than native-born children and their families. These researchers concluded that once enrolled in school, the immigrant students' educational attainment was equal, if not greater, than that of the native-born children and youth.
Other studies looked at different issues with regard to immigrant children and their families. In the United States, Bersola-Nguyen (1995) examined Vietnamese and Filipino immigrant families' child-rearing practices and their children's social interactions and social understandings and found that the parents value both the American value of independence in terms of leading their day-to-day lives and their own traditional values of interdependence such as close ties with extended family. The Ethiopian parents in this study also want their children to be familiar with the cultures of both Canada and Ethiopia. For example, they want their children to value the Canadian culture of assertiveness to defend themselves whenever necessary. They also want them to value complete obedience and high respect for parents and elderly people as in the case of children in Ethiopia. In some cases, immigrant families have more adherence to their culture. Delgado-Gaitan's (1993) investigation on child-rearing practices of American-born and first-generation Mexican immigrants parents showed that both groups adhered to collectivism in their child-rearing practices and "exhibited a strong orientation toward family ties" which is one of the major components of Mexican culture. In Alberta, Canada, Strom (1992) investigated the educational concerns and needs of immigrant families from Vietnam and Central and South America. The study showed that in spite of the parents' intention to retain their home language, their children were not able to speak their home language. The Ethiopian parents in this study also want their children to speak their home language. But as this study shows, their children do not speak the home language to their expectations.

The question relevant to this particular study is: how could one maintain one's home language particularly during the early linguistic development of children? To answer this
question, it is worthwhile mentioning the early language development policy in Sweden. As Siren (1991, p. 5) writes, in Sweden "early linguistic development of ....... children will be dependent on (parent's) choice. If parents communicate with their child in a minority language at home, the child is entitled to home language support in preschools and schools". To constantly stimulate the child's bilingual and bi-cultural development, several forms of home language support are used. One of the forms of supporting home language development in ECES is assigning home language support teachers known as "itinerants" (transients) who travel to several ECES and provide home language support to individuals or groups of children for a certain number of hours in a week (Siren, 1991). The other form of promoting home language support is forming a group in ECES where all the children and the majority of the staff belong to same linguistic and cultural backgrounds so that they could use their own language as a major means of communication and use Swedish language to a certain extent (Siren, 1991).

The question that can be raised here is this: are there policies and programs that deal with the promotion of home language particularly for early childhood age children in Canada? Though I did not come across policy statements and programs that exclusively discuss the issue of home language promotion at early childhood education levels in Canada, there are numerous Canadian studies that advocate the importance of looking at early childhood education from a cross-cultural perspective and early educators' preparation to deal with culturally, racially and linguistically diverse children (Aina, 1994; Bernhard, 1995; Bernhard & Freire, 1994; Bernhard, Lefebvre, Chud & lange, 1997; Bernhard, Lefebvre, Chud & Lange., 1995; Biemiller, Regan & Lero, 1992; Corson, 1994; Cummins, 1989; Darder, 1991; Dotsch, 1992; LaGrange, Clark &
Monroe, 1994; Mock, 1986). Canada’s minority language policy is interrelated with its policy of “multiculturalism”. In fact, as Fleras & Elliot (1992, p. 2) write, “the emergence of multiculturalism as a formal instrument for managing diversity is highly recognized as Canada’s outstanding contribution to the field of race and ethnic relations...

Indeed the term multiculturalism is a Canadian creation”. Fleras & Elliot (1992, p. 75) also write that Canada is “the first country in the world to pass a national multicultural law... to assist... cultural and language preservation, to reduce discrimination, to enhance inter-cultural awareness and understanding, and to promote culturally sensitive institutional change at federal level”. Since language and culture are inseparable, the multicultural policy of Canada embraces the preservation of both minority language and culture (Findlay, 1975). Though policy such as this is very encouraging, much of the problem revolves around aspects of implementation.

In Canada, the program intended to promote languages other than English, French and Aboriginal languages is known as “a heritage language program”. As Fleras & Elliot (1992, p. 157) write, there are “three kinds of heritage language programs in Canada: bilingually based heritage language programs where heritage languages are used as the language of instruction; heritage language programs usually held after class hours or on weekends, and heritage language programs which are run by cultural group communities. Most, if not all, of these programs serve school age children and youth. So the question to be raised is: how much do early childhood age children benefit from heritage language programs? What problems do younger children encounter when attending such programs? These are questions that may need to be answered by future research.

In 1983 Julie Dotsch and her colleague Mui Sum Fung undertook a study on the
cultural adaptation and second language acquisition of newcomer preschool children in Toronto (Dotsch, 1992). One of their findings is that "all new immigrant children go through some form of settlement and cultural adaptation as they enter childcare programs" (Dotsch, 1992, p. 25). They also found out that "there is a direct and constant correlation between the stages of cultural adaptation and the stages of linguistic (or second-language) acquisition (Dotsch, 1992, p. 25). The fact that language and culture are inseparable (Findlay, 1975) makes this finding very plausible.

In recent studies on the education and care of immigrant and refugee children and children of diverse culture and language at early childhood education levels in Canada, Bernhard and her co-authors have dealt with numerous and comprehensive issues. For example, Bernhard (1995) strongly argued the need to look at child development from cultural and contextual points of view so as to be able to deal with children of diverse cultures and languages. Furthermore, Bernhard and Freire (1996) have conducted a study on the perceptions of parents and caregivers of Latino refugee children in Toronto ECES. One of their findings indicated that while caregivers did not value the importance of the Spanish language for the children, parents "expressed concerns about lack of support for the use of their native language" (Bernhard & Freire, 1996, p. 59). As pointed out in Chapter Seven, the teachers in this study also do not think that it is their duty to be concerned about the home language in their classrooms. On the other hand, the Ethiopian parents believe in the importance of support from the teachers so that their children could be motivated to retain their home language. This finding supports Bernhard and Freire's (1996) finding. As a whole it is important that early childhood teachers understand the value of home language and encourage children to speak them.
3.6. SOME ASPECTS OF THEORIES OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT

"Early childhood education has a close relationship to the study of child development" (York, 1991, p. 12). The nature of children’s minds, how and why children develop or are delayed intellectually, socially, physically and emotionally, what factors delay or promote their development, the role of genes and environment, how they learn and acquire experiences and what they learn are included in theories of child development (Trawick-Smith, 1997). Understanding these concepts is very important in the theory and practice of early childhood education. Psychologists, sociologists, educators and researchers have identified many contrasting theories of child development, each of which is “based on research and a set of assumptions about the nature of human experiences” (Trawick-Smith, 1997, p. 50).

The idea most emphasized in this thesis is the idea of child “development in context”. However, although it may not be necessary to go deeply into the literature of the traditional child development theories such as maturation theory, behaviorist theory, psychoanalytic theory and cognitive theory, briefing on the core ideas and some of the controversies associated with them might serve as a background information on earlier theories of child development.

3.6.1. MATURATIONIST THEORY

Maturationist theory assumes that the influence of genetics and maturity on the learning and behaviour of children is more powerful than environment and experiences (Scarr, 1993). Psychologists who strongly believe in this theory contend that certain
children could be talented, for example, in arts or music because of genetically derived traits. That means, their beliefs lead to the notion that parenting, teaching, social, economical, cultural, historical and racial differences play lesser role as compared to genetic influences. Early advocates of this theory include Arnold Gesell. Gesell saw "the development of the child as a natural phenomenon" (Spodeck & Saracho, 1996, p. 2). In other words, this theory holds the notion that given that children are provided with healthy diets, love and care, they will grow in a predetermined way as their genes and maturity dictate their skills and abilities.

To assume genetics as a major determinant of learning may lead to some controversial and even fallacious conclusions. For example, as Morgolin (1974) writes such theory might lead to the argument that one race is inferior to another in learning experiences due to differences in genes. As indicated earlier, a case in point is what Arthur Jensen (1969) wrote in his article entitled "How Much Can We Boost IQ and Scholastic Achievement?" In this article, he concluded that the IQ of African American Children was lower than the IQ of White American children due to genetic factors (Jensen, 1969). This article was alarming, disturbing and very controversial to those educators, sociologists and anthropologists who believed that children's differences occur because of environmental, societal, historical and experiential differences. Ogbu (1988) strongly opposed the essence of Jensen's (1969) article and argued that differences in the two groups of children, African American and white American children, were differences that occurred due to the unique historical experiences of the African Americans and their world views and not due to genetically derived intellectual deficiencies. Historical, cultural, societal or personal experiences of people or groups of people can influence
children's experiences. For example, the experiences of the children in this study was influenced not only by their parents' cultures, language, religions, beliefs and political experiences in their country of origin, Ethiopia, but also by their experiences in their new country, Canada.

3.6.2. BEHAVIOURIST THEORY

Earlier advocates of the behaviourist theory like John B. Watson assumed that the child's mind is like a "blank slate" or an "empty vessel" that needs to be filled by various factors of the environment. They argued that "all that children are and will become is derived from experiences" (Trawick-Smith, 1997, p. 56). Although experience plays a great role in the formation of children's behaviour and skills, the notion that the child's mind at birth is like a "blank slate" or an "empty vessel", might limit our understanding of how children, starting from their infancy, play a role in their own development. For example, regardless of race, ethnic background and culture, infants, starting from the moment of birth, have certain behaviours which enable them to elicit attention and cooperation from mothers or from other care-givers (Ainsworth, 1974; Brunner, 1977; Corsini, 1984; Kaye, 1982; Schaffer, 1977; Travarthen, 1980; Travarthen, 1986; Wacbs & Gruen, 1982). According to this psychological viewpoint and from what we see in our day-to-day interactions with our infant children as parents and caretakers, they are capable of organizing spontaneous behaviours from the moment of birth. Their abilities to suck, cry, seek proximity and their abilities to smile are some of the examples which may show that infants play a role in the process of interactions with their caregivers and, in turn, in the process of their development and experiences. In fact, as Trevarthen (1986)
emphasizes, regardless of race and place where they are born, infants show some form of expression such as pre-speech movements of lips and tongue, cooing, vocalizing associated with pre-speech and gesture of hands which are pre-adaptive to the later acquisitions of communication and language. Although experiential learning is very important in determining who young children are and who they will be, they also play roles in the development of their behaviours and in getting attention from their caregivers. In short, as Hatchison (1998, p. 62) writes, "just as the world is a constructor of the child, so too the child is a constructor of the world".

3.6.3. PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORY

The psychoanalytic theory was developed by Sigmund Freud. He believed that "development is influenced by a continuously renewed need for gratification of basic instinct" (Salkind, 1985, p. 14). Freud (1938) contends that the child's mind has three components: the id, the ego and the superego. While that part of the mind which he called the "id" creates constant demand to satisfy desires, the other part of the mind which he called the "ego" appears in early infancy and redirects or checks the "id" so that desires will be fulfilled in the right time. At the end of early childhood, however, the part of the mind which he called the "superego" appears within the child's personality. This part of the child's mind is believed to be comprised of conscience that enables the child to follow values, rules, mores and cultures of various types in the society to which s/he belongs to. Freud saw a series of stages in the child's development which are "universal to all cultures" (Spodek & Saracho, 1996, p. 3). He believed that fulfilling the needs of the child at each stage was very important in promoting a healthy emotional development.
For this reason, "from a psychoanalytic point of view, care should be taken by the preschool teacher to follow this sequence of stages. This theory emphasizes that inappropriate experiences in growing up might frustrate the child and lead to a lasting preoccupation with the concern of a particular stage" (Spodek & Saracho, 1996, p. 3). In other words, from the viewpoint of this theory, early childhood education teachers are expected to be more concerned with the emotional needs of the children. Although concern for the emotional needs of children is important, it cannot stand by itself. The physical, the social and the intellectual needs of children should also be considered. In other words, they are all interrelated.

3.6.4. COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT THEORY

Cognitive development theory describes how children develop abstract thinking and reasoning and how they get to know about their world (Serpell, 1976). According to this theory "almost all aspects of human life - even making friends, learning to excel at basketball, feeling happy or depressed or enjoying a sunny day are directly influenced by thinking and language"(Trawick-Smith, 1997, p. 67). The important element that is given most attention in this theory is mental growth.

The psychologist who is highly associated with cognitive developmental theory is Piaget. "A fundamental principle of his theory is that knowledge is constructed through the action of the learners"(Trawick-Smith, 1997, p. 69). Piaget, who is considered as maturationist by some (Spodek & Saracho, 1996), and cognitive developmental theorist by others (Pellegrini, 1988), "proposed that a child's modes of thought for a series of stages of intellectual growth [is] common to all children" (Thomas, 1979, p. 4). His
theory emphasized the notion that "a child's ability to understand what is said to him, and in turn his ability to use language informatively, depends upon his stage of intellectual development" (Jipson, 1991). It "assumes universal predictable change in children's development at particular ages and stages regardless of context" (Smith, 1996, p. 53).

With due respect to the contribution of Piaget to theories of child development in general and to the theory and practice of early childhood education in particular, I raise questions such as: is it always possible to predict universal change in children's development at a particular ages and stages? What about the social and the natural environment where the child is situated in? I think what and how a child thinks and acts depends not only on his natural mind and her/his age but also on the social, cultural, technological, economical and the natural environment where s/he is situated in. Just to cite one example, quite a long time ago, I talked with a little boy of six years in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. He was attending half day school. For the other half, he was shining shoes. I asked him why he was doing that at that age. He told me that he had to earn income to support himself and his ill mother. I also asked him what he would like to be when he grew up. He told me that he would like to be a medical doctor so that he could treat his ill mother. Since I used to live around the area where he lived, I had a chance of following that little boy. Certainly, by shining shoes and earning money, he was supporting himself and his mother. Due to the situation where he was in, he was so responsible early in his life to the extent of helping himself, his mother and thinking for his future. To my surprise, he finished high school successfully and joined a medical school where he was provided with boarding and living allowances. He graduated as a medical doctor, although his mother died before his graduation. What I am trying to indicate here is that apart from
age, the socio-cultural and other environmental situations dictate how children think and act. I believe it is from this point of view that many psychologists, educators, sociologists and anthropologists argue that both social and natural environmental contexts should be considered in child development. In fact, organizations and individuals emphasizing developmentally appropriate practices mainly from Piaget's point of view are beginning to recognize the role that cultures and other contexts play in child development. For example, the program of the National Association for Education of Young Children (NAEYC) in the U.S. which was emphasizing the concept of Developmentally Appropriate Practice mainly based on Piaget theory "...was revised in 1997 to include a great emphasis on cultural diversity, family concerns and individual children's needs" (Harms, Clifford, & Cyer, 1998, p. 1). So the concept of Developmentally and Culturally Appropriate Practice (DCAP) is beginning to come to the literature of child development (Hyun, 1998).

In general, theories that view development as a natural process such as cognitive theory, psychoanalytic theory and maturation theory "see children's development as primarily directed from within" (Spodek & Saracho, 1996, p. 2). They focus on the characteristics of the individual child when they deal with the issues of adjustment and other aspects of the child's experiences and development. On other hand, as discussed in the following section, many researchers argue that child development should embrace both the natural and the social contextual factors. I also support this view point of considering both the natural and the social contextual aspects in child development. What do these contextual factors include? The following section answers this question.
3.6.5. CHILD DEVELOPMENT IN CONTEXT

Early childhood educators, developmental psychologists, sociologists, environmentalists and anthropologists who see child development from the contextual point of view stress that child development can well be understood not only by looking at the natural characteristics of the child, but also by looking at the child in relation to the "social and the natural environmental contexts" surrounding her/him (Bernhard, 1995; Bernhard, Lefbvre, Chud & Lange, 1995; Boehm & Weinberg, 1997; Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986; Dei, 1993, 1994, 1996; Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; Gibson & Ogbu, 1991; Greey, 1994; Hutchison, 1998; Kessen, 1983; Maehr & Stallings, 1975; Morgolin, 1974; Nsamenang, 1992; Ogbu, 1991; Ohuche & Otaala, 1981; Oloko, 1993; Spodek 1991; 1996; Pike & Selby, 1988, 1999a, 1999b; Spodek & Saracho, 1996; Super & Harkness, 1986; Trawick-Smith, 1997; Wozmah & Fisher, 1993). The viewpoint of child development in context "questions whether developmental and individual competence can be attributed solely to... relatively stable characteristics of the individual" (Sansone & Berg, 1993, p. 216) and suggests the need to understand contexts for development (Thouin & Corter, 1993). Many argue that exclusive focus on cognitive developmental theory of child development limits the possibility of looking at early childhood education research, training of teachers, curriculum development and classroom practice from the contextual point of view (Bernhard, 1995; Bernhard, Lefbvre, Chud & Lange, 1995; Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Jipson, 1991; Rogoff, 1982, 1984; Super & Harkness, 1986; Smith, 1996; Thouin & Corter, 1993). In fact, Super & Harkness (1986, p. 545) argue that developmental theorists who believe mainly in child development as a natural process have been concerned with the "decontextualized universal individual". In other words,
child development from a contextual perspective embraces the child's nature and those broader social and natural environmental factors that influence her/his experiences or personality.

Environmental factors influencing child development, both natural and social, might be illustrated by Figure 1 on page 78. In this figure, the straight lines show the social and the natural contexts by which the experience/development of children are directly influenced. They include the immediate environmental factors such as the home, the neighbourhood and the school/ECES. The broken lines show the natural and the social contexts by which the experiences or the developments of the children are indirectly influenced. They include environmental factors such as the community, the nation and the world or the globe at large.

"The notion that development is influenced by the environment is about as old as the idea of development itself; in trivial sense, environment in the form of 'stimuli' or even 'experience' has been the cornerstone of psychology since its earliest philosophical beginnings. But as the formal discipline of psychology was created to apply the scientific method to understand the human mind, the environment as an object of study was excluded. The new science of the mind sought universal laws, free of context, in the isolation of the laboratory" (Super & Harkness, 1986, p. 549). However, in the 1970s and 1980s researchers such as McCall (1977), Bronfenbrenner (1979), Kessen (1979, 1983), Super and Harkness (1986) contend that the study of child development should be more concerned in understanding the relationship of the child with the natural and social environmental contexts. For example, Kessen (1983) strongly argues that it is not only the child that should be the object of study, but it should be the child-in-context.
LEGEND:
1 = HOME
2 = NEIGHBORHOOD
3 = EARLY CHILDHOOD SETTINGS/SCHOOLS
4 = COMMUNITY
5 = Nation
6 = WORLD

Figure 1: Environmental Factors Influencing Children’ Development (Adapted from Wubie, Kebede, Makonen & Moll, 1984, cover page)
Hutchison (1998, p. 78) also writes that “a holistic and ecologically sensitive view of child development” has been ignored by the main stream child development theories such as psychoanalytic and cognitive-development theories. According to him “ecologically sensitive” view of child development considers “the role played by peak experiences, story, place, and first-hand contact with the natural world in promoting healthy development into adulthood” (Hutchison, 1998, p. 3). He further argues that since human beings, other animals and the natural world are interdependent/interconnected, there is a need to promote “ecologically sensitive approach to education”. Based on this conception, he proposes what he terms as “ecologically sensitive curriculum” for primary school age education. I found his concept of “ecologically sensitive curriculum” so fascinating and useful to teach young children both at home and at ECES about nature. For example, from early on, it is possible to create in the minds of little children a sense of “connectedness” to the natural world (Hutchison, 1998; Pike & Selby, 1988; 1999a, 1999b) by encouraging them to realize that the materials in their homes or their classrooms such as the chairs, the tables, the puzzles, the papers, the crayons and the clothes they wear are made from natural plants such as trees, leaves, cottons, minerals, soils, grasses that are found on “our earth”. It is also possible to make them realize that since the food we eat, the water we drink, the air we breathe are very important for our lives, we should care for them.

In fact, from what we see in ECES and in our daily lives, children as young as one year old or even younger love: to play with water, to caress animals such as cats and dogs and to imitate their voices, to stare at moving insects such as ants, to catch butterflies and birds, to touch and smell flowers, to see rain drops, to play with ice, snow and sand and to
run in open air. It seems that very young children have a natural urge to interact with natural things around them showing the role that nature plays in their development. In other words, their daily life experiences are “interconnected with both natural and human-made things” (Pike & Selby, 1988, 1995, 1999a, 1999b).

In general, numerous physical and social environmental/ecological contexts influence child development/experience. The physical environmental context may be divided into two: “natural and human-made environment. The natural environment may include the “earth” and what it contains such as climate, plants, animals, minerals, rocks, water, air and rain. For example, the movement of a child who is born in a place where there is severe winter or very warm summer can be restricted as s/he may not go out and play with her/his peers in the open fields influencing her/his physical and social development; a child who is born in an area where the air is polluted may have health problems affecting her/his normal development and a child who is born in a place where there is deforestation may be affected by the lack of water that may result in drought.

Human-made environment may include such things as classroom buildings with the associated space, furniture and educational materials; homes with the necessary space, furniture and children’s educational or play materials; play grounds and the associated equipment, etc. Such physical environment can influence children’s development in terms of their education and social interactions. For example, as discussed in Chapter Seven, Section, 7.3.1, the physical set up of the classrooms, the space and educational materials in them influence the types of activities that the children do and the resultant experiences that they gain. Similarly, the physical environment of their homes in the terms of its arrangement and materials influence their experiences and in turn their
intellectual, physical and social development.

The social environmental contexts include such things as culture, social norms, rituals, rules, religion, child-rearing patterns, social institutions, technological trends, global economy, politics, histories, immigration, society's attitudes and beliefs; parents' socioeconomic status, beliefs, attitudes, values, past and present experiences, family health, level of education, class, race, color, ethnicity and gender; the peer groups, siblings and extended families; teachers' attitudes, experiences, ethno-cultural background, status and training. These social contexts do not stand by themselves. Rather, they are "interconnected" with both the natural and human-made environmental factors (Hutchison, 1998; Pike & Selby, 1988, 1999a, 1999b; Super & Harkness, 1986).

Psychologists such as Eric Erickson and Lev Vygotsky are associated with the notion of child development in contexts. "Vygotsky's theory suggests that development can only be understood in the social context in which the child functions. Erickson views the child as developing within socially constructed context" (Spodek & Saracho, 1996, p. 3).

Bronfenbrenner (1979) stresses idea of studying the child in context in his theory of ecology of human development. As stated by Hutchison (1998, p.129) Bronfenbrenner supported the idea that "learning and development proceed in a dynamic way as the result of interactions between children and the various environmental systems that mediate their lives". Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory of the "ecology of human development" consists of four major areas which influence the child's development or experience: a) micro-system: the immediate environments of the child such as home, school and neighbourhood; b) meso-system: the relationships between settings such as the relationships of home and school or the relationship between parents and teachers; c) exo-
system: events or situations beyond the child's immediate environment such as parents' conditions of employment and their economic and social status in society and their childhood experiences; d) macro-system: the political, economic, historical and social conditions of a nation or the world at large in which the child and her/his parents are living. This may include such things as a government's policy with regard to early childhood education and care programs in a nation or state, societal beliefs about races, societal values about child-rearing practices, struggle for power within nations, war between nations, economic growth or economic deterioration within in a nation, draughts, air pollution and deforestation.

The main point in ecology of child development lies in the notion that both the immediate and remote environment "shapes the course of human development or experiences throughout the life span" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 11). The immediate environment may include both the social and the physical environment of the home, the school/early childhood education settings and the neighborhood. Relating the theory of Bronfenbrenner's ecology of child development to early childhood education and care, Carlson (1989, p. 51) writes that "children grow in micro-systems, in families, which often merge with early childhood programs to form both micro and meso-systems, in the case of this study, the relationship of home and ECES. Furthermore, micro and meso-systems can be impacted by the directions and values of the macro-systems and the natural and human-made environmental factors at the local, the national and the global community levels in which they are embedded (Hutchison, 1998; Pike & Selby, 1988, 1999a, 1999b).

Super and Harkness's (1986, p. 565) concept of "developmental niche" embraces the
interface of child development and culture. They emphasize that culture itself, customs, attitudes and child-rearing practices of people are influenced by the physical and the natural environment where they are located. In fact, Super and Harkness's (1986) concept of "developmental niche" has three components: "the physical and the social settings in which the child lives (the physical and the social settings refers to where and with whom children spend their daily lives. For example, where and with whom children sleep makes a difference in their sleep patterns); the customs of childcare and child-rearing, and the psychology of the caretakers. The psychology of the caretakers include ethnotheories of child development as well as the commonly learned affective orientations which parents bring to their experiences of parenting. Most important among the ethnotheories are beliefs concerning the nature of needs of children, parental and community goals for rearing and caretakers beliefs about effective rearing techniques" (Super & Harkness 1986, p. 545, 565). As McKIM (1993, p. 29) writes, this ecological model of human development is used to examine children's educational experiences and other related aspects in early childhood education. This particular study also has elements that could be related to some of the issues of "ecology of human development" in examining the experiences of children of first generation Ethiopian immigrant parents. For example, it has used the home and the ECES (micro-system: immediate environments) as the two major places for exploring the experiences of the children of first generation Ethiopian immigrant parents; it has shown how the relationship of home and ECES (meso-system) influences the experiences of the children; it has also shown that children's experiences were not only influenced by immediate factors such as the home and the ECES but also by remote factors such as the parents' own experiences in their country of origin, Ethiopia.
and in their new country, Canada (exo-system). However, it is important to note that the
discussions and the analysis of this thesis is, mainly, focussed on the children's home and
ECES, although these two settings are also influenced by wider contexts. Other than this,
as the age of the children varies from four to six, their experiences are not limited to
daycare centers only. Part of the day they go to kindergartens or first grades. I looked their
experiences in the ECES, daycare centers, where they spend a portion of the day. In other
words, the study looked only some aspects of their experiences.

As Bornstein (1991) writes to discuss children's development in terms of perception,
cognition, communication, emotion, personality, learning capacities and social interaction
or adaptation without the consideration of contexts such as culture, languages, attitudes,
values and home-school relationship is an incomplete task (Bornstein, 1991). As
behaviours are governed by contexts such as norms, values, beliefs and practices, children
from a particular cultural group in a multicultural society may have behaviours that are
different from the behaviours of children of the mainstream culture (Villarruel, Imig &
Kostelnik, 1995). Understanding differences in the culture and the prior experiences of
children are essential in order to observe differences in school performance (Cicourel,
1982). Since different cultures involve different kinds of characteristics in role
behaviour, looking at children's background in contexts can provide insights into
understanding their behaviours in classroom situations (Morgolin, 1974). Therefore, it is
important that individual differences in classroom situations be understood from the
contextual point of view (Bruth & Manning, 1992) because contextual aspects such as
differences in languages and cultures have a large influence on the way children learn and
on the way teachers teach (York, 1991). Therefore, the planning of teaching/learning
experiences must consider individual differences in abilities, interest, motivation, language and other previous backgrounds of children to enhance positive effect in the learning/teaching process (Bruth & Manning, 1992). As Cummins (1989) also writes, elements such as child attachment to adults, separation from adults, sleep patterns, toilet training, mealt ime behaviour, discipline, style of communication with children, gender roles and age related expectations of parents for their children differ depending on sociocultural contexts with which they are familiar with. Such differences have impacts on the experience of children during their transition from home to ECES as discussed in Chapter Six of this study.

Researchers such as Garcia and McLaughlin (1995), Bernhard (1995), Bernhard, Lefbvre, Chud and Lange, (1995) emphasize the need for professionals such as teachers, researchers, supervisors and others, dealing with issues of early childhood education to consider not only the natural characteristics but also the contextual dimensions of child development to understand children's educational, social, intellectual and emotional experiences. In other words, there is no universally accepted account of human development as human development is subjected to contextual factors (Bernhard, 1995; Nsamenang, 1992). As Boehm and Weinberg (1997, p. xiv, 10) also write, one cannot "understand children's... experience without placing it in context; the multiple contexts in which the child spends time including the home, preschool, daycare, families, religious settings or community environment are all important".

In general, this study embraces both psychological and sociological perspectives in examining the experiences of children of first generation Ethiopian immigrant parents at home and in ECES, mainly, through the perspectives of their parents and teachers.
Elements of concepts from different theoretical perspectives were used to explain the experiences of the children. For example, it has elements of the concept of dealing with diversity in ECES (Bernhard, 1995; Bernhard, Lefebvre, Chud & Lange, 1995): it has elements from the theory of the "ecology of human development" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; 1986; Hutchison, 1998; Pike & Selby, 1988; 1999a, 1999b) which argues that children's experiences/developments are influenced both by natural and human-made environmental factors; it has elements from the concept of developmental niche that explains the interface of culture and child development (Super and Harkness, 1986); it has elements from the perspective of developmentally and culturally appropriate practices (Hyun, 1998); it has elements from the perspectives on "bilingualism/multilingualism" (Cummins, 1979, 1985; 1986, 1996; Dotsch, 1992; Feurverger, 1994; McGroarty, 1988; Siren, 1991) that emphasize the importance of maintaining home languages and cultures; and it has elements from the perspective of "anti-racism education" (Dei, 1996) as the study touches some issues of racism in children's early years. Therefore, the conceptual framework of this thesis is not based on a single theory, rather it is based on multi-conceptual frameworks: however, the notions of these multi-conceptual frameworks might boil down to a single notion of "looking at children's experiences in contexts"
4. 1. METHODOLOGICAL ORIENTATION

In this section of the thesis, the methodology that framed my research approach is explained. As a background, some of the literature on the two major research paradigms, that is qualitative and quantitative research, are briefly reviewed.

In many ways, "the decision to use qualitative and quantitative methods is replete with the assumption concerning the nature of knowledge and reality and the process of acquiring knowledge about reality" (Hathway, 1995, p. 536). In fact, their differences in perspective start with how they make sense of social reality. Many qualitative researchers argue that the nature of the social world is different from that of the natural world and should be investigated in different ways. There are also some qualitative researchers who say that the natural world can be investigated by using qualitative research method. For example, some environmentalist use qualitative approach when they study natural things.

In general, qualitative researchers "assume that, in the social world, there are multiple realities, that the world is not an objective thing out there, but a function of personal interaction and perception" (Merriam, 1988, p. 17). According to the perspectives of such researchers, knowledge is constructed socially through an intimate relationship between the researcher and the researched (Cole, 1989; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). For them, knowledge is also gained when a researcher reflects on her/his behaviour and thoughts as well as the phenomenon under study (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Furthermore, as Briescheke (1992, P. 173, 177) writes "qualitative researchers/postpositivists accept ... an interpretive or hermeneutic character of all human knowledge so that there is not one
truth but many". They emphasize the importance of unity between subjectivity and objectivity in the process of gaining knowledge and building theory from experience, that is they emphasize inter-subjectivity. For example, when the parents or the teachers in this study explain what they think of the children's feelings during their transition or adjustment, it is possible that their interpretation of the children's feelings may be influenced by their own feelings because as qualitative researchers argue, in many ways, there is no such thing as objectivity in social science (Briescheke, 1992; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Glesene and Peshkin, 1992).

In a qualitative research approach, experiential knowledge is validated and in many ways both the researcher and the researched are committed to reflecting and understanding the meanings of things. For example, even though the data on the experiences of the children in this study is not gained from the mouth of the children, the experiential knowledge of the parents and the teachers about the experiences of the children and the interpretation or the meaning they attach to what they observe and feel about these experiences is validated (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Furthermore, qualitative research approach does not emphasize predetermined hypotheses to be proved, it recognizes and develops in fluid ways of constructing knowledge (Briescheke, 1992) and the themes, ideas, concepts, and theories that emerge in the process of the study are considered to be useful and transferable to other situations.

On the other hand, although not all, many quantitative/positivist researchers argue that "there is no qualitative differences between the natural and the social world such that the method and procedures of the natural science can...be applied to the investigation of the social science world"(Hitchcock & Hughes, 1989, p. 22). In this research approach, it is
usually assumed that there is a single and constant objective reality out there that can be known, observed, measured and confirmed (Merriam, 1988). The research approach is also characterized by predetermined variables and analysis based on quantitative data (Jacob, 1987). It sets and tests hypotheses. It predicts and controls behavior. It emphasizes the notion of experiment, systematic measurement, sampling strategies, statistical analysis, generalizability, reliability and objectivity (Graue & Walsh, 1995).

I am not here to judge the research paradigms by saying “this research approach is wrong or that research approach is right”. In other words, it is not a matter of agreeing or disagreeing about the paradigms between the two research approaches. Rather, it is a matter of raising the question which of research approach could better explain or explore the issues and questions which I raised in this particular study and why?” As I indicated earlier, the major purpose of my study is to explore the experiences of children of first generation Ethiopian immigrant parents in their homes and in their ECECS, mainly, through the perspectives of the parents and the teachers and come up with ideas, themes, concepts, theories and processes that could contribute to: a) curriculum and teaching/learning process in ECECS with children of diverse cultures and languages; b) policy issues; c) training of early childhood education teachers; and d) training of parent educators, particularly for those who deal with recent immigrant parents. I believe that using qualitative research approach would be appropriate to fulfill this particular purpose.

Although supplemented by information gained through observing the children at home and at ECES and my own experiences as an early childhood education teacher, the major source of the data for this particular study is the experiential knowledge of the children’s parents and teachers. At this point, one may ask: how could one draw data on the nature
of children’s experiences particularly from parents who might not have training or knowledge on child development? To answer this question, I believe, it is imperative to discuss how knowledge can be acquired from the life experiences of people.

To begin with, as normal human beings, we all acquire knowledge through our senses while we interact with the world around us. In other words, each person is always in the process of learning/teaching starting from birth till death. This process of teaching and learning takes place through constant interactions with one another, intentionally or unintentionally, anywhere and anytime with no boundaries of space, culture, race, ethnicity, class, gender, religion, political beliefs, education and level of socioeconomic development. The individual is always in the process of absorbing and understanding language, culture, child-rearing practices, skills, manners, norms, rules, regulations, the nature of people’s behaviours and why people behave in a certain ways from the environments where s/he lives or s/he happens to come across. Through such a process s/he accumulates experiences. If I define this teaching and learning process in a broad sense as an act of absorbing or taking in of knowledge such as language, ideas, culture, customs, skills, manners, child-rearing practices, technology and transmitting them to others, mainly, through the process of interaction with one another, then I may be safe to say that everybody is a teacher and a learner throughout her/his lifetime that every place is a school and everything in the surroundings is a teaching and learning material. From this point of view then, even the person who is termed as 'uneducated', if we define 'uneducated' as the person who has never gone to formal schooling, is also a teacher and a learner and has something to offer and to receive. If this were not the case, societies’ values, cultures, history, civilization, attitudes, beliefs, religions, and the wisdom of our
ancestors would not have been transmitted from generation to generation. To put it in another way, unless education is equated with attending formal schooling, I do not believe that there is such a thing as an 'uneducated person'. I believe that under normal circumstances, everyone regardless of her/his ethnic, economic and social background absorbs knowledge and experience from her/his surrounding and has something to offer about things with which s/he is familiar. Of course, the meaning and the understanding s/he attaches to the world around her/him depends on the way s/he perceives or interprets these experiences.

Dei (1993, p. 62) argues that "the idea that one's view of social reality is the only reality is a dangerous delusion". People do have different perspectives. For example, a behaviour, a phenomenon or an act that is considered to be correct and acceptable in one society or in an individual’s point of view could be considered incorrect or unacceptable by another society or another individual. Truth depends on how a particular individual or society interprets or gives meaning to that particular phenomenon. But it is also important to note that not all what people believe, perceive or act are useful to society. For example, in some societies of Pakistan, there is what is known as “honour killing". What this means is that if women are seen with men without getting the approval of the family, their own fathers, brothers and other relatives are entitled to kill them. I think this is a horrible act against humanity. Similarly, female mutilation in some societies of Sub-Saharan Africa is a dangerous practice.

In the qualitative research approach, experiential knowledge is validated and, in many ways, both the researcher and the researched are committed to reflecting and understanding the meanings of things. In so doing, they both bring their life experiences
to their discussions or reflections. These lived experiences and the interpretations given to them are central as sources of knowledge. I call these lived experiences: 'reservoir of knowledge'. As discussed in Chapter Seven, particularly in Section 7.4.1, even the young children in this study bring their lived experiences to the classroom. At their own level, their lived experiences are also ‘reservoir of knowledge’. The fact that the lived experiences of people differ depending on their culture, education, age, race, ethnicity, social class, gender and political, historical, economical and other natural and human-made environmental situations they come from means that this reservoir contains a variety of knowledge. If research is to be a way of searching out the unknown, or if it is a way of uncovering the covered or the hidden, tapping this variety of knowledge from this reservoir is very important. I believe that the approach that seems appropriate in tapping knowledge from experiences is the qualitative approach. In other words, to know the unknown and the hidden, the reservoir of the researcher and the researched can be explored, described, interpreted and reflected upon by using various qualitative research methodologies such as phenomenology (Manen, 1990), qualitative case study (Merriam, 1988), life history (Cole, 1991; Cole & Knowles, 1995, 2001), narrative (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) and ethnography (Goez & LeCompte, 1981, 1984; Woods, 1986).

Using the above theory, I strongly believe that parents', teachers' and children's reservoir of experiences contain knowledge and skills that can be tapped to understand the experiences of the children in my study at home and at the ECES. Parents and teachers are not only in close proximity with young children, but also provide their needs, care for them, participate in their day to day activities and observe their movements. I believe that parents' and early childhood education teachers' closeness and practical
experiences with young children enable them to be in a position to understand who the children are, what the nature of their experiences are, how they gain their experiences and why they need to gain such experiences. "Parents know their children and how they think about and interact with them better than anyone else. Their knowledge base cuts both across time and across social context" (Rubin & Mills, 1992, p. 41). Although they may not recall everything that their children have done, I believe that using information from parents would contribute to the understanding of children's experiences. From the theoretical point of view explained earlier, even if parents do not have formal training in child development, they have a lot to offer to theories of child development. Through day-to-day contact with their children, not only are they teachers but they also are learners. The parents learn from their children. Children are great source of education. Furthermore, they educate themselves by their own childhood experiences which they compare to the way they rear their own children. As Nathani (1996, p. 189) argues, "knowledge production is not only an exercise for the academia, but also for lay people. Knowledge is acquired through our everyday experience and that formal education is just one form of knowledge acquisition". From this point of view, even if parents do not have formal training in child development, their experiences with their children is a source of knowledge because children are a great source of knowledge.

Next to parents, early childhood education teachers are close to young children. Through their training and experiences that they gained by interacting with children and parents in ECES and elsewhere, teachers are a good source of information about the children they are teaching, what they teach, how they teach, why they teach and the resultant experiences of the children. In short, I strongly believe that the perspectives of
both parents and teachers are fertile ground to be tapped to understand the nature of children’s experiences at home and in ECES. As indicated elsewhere, digging such fertile ground and tapping this information in depth necessitates the use of a qualitative research approach. Particularly, access to human elements and contexts, in this case the parents’ and the teachers’ thoughts, feelings, desires, aspirations, hopes, beliefs, frustrations, pains, love and tensions about themselves and the children are better captured through the use of the qualitative research approach whereas they might not be captured by statistics. Furthermore, as a person with experiences in the field of early childhood education, this research approach also allows me to consolidate and recognize my own voice in the text of my thesis. In other words, a qualitative research approach allows me to acknowledge my own perspective and experience.

"Traditionally, research in early childhood education has been dominated by quantitative approaches with roots in developmental and behavioural psychology" (Hatch, 1995: xi) because child development theory has been less attentive to cultural context or looking at children’s experiences within contexts (Bernhard, 1995; Bruner, 1986, 1990; Bruner & Haste, 1987; Graue & Walsh, 1995; Inagaki, 1992; Walsh, 1991). In the past, studies concentrated, mainly, on children themselves. On the other hand, as Graue and Walsh (1995, p. 139, 142) write unless "we take seriously the charge to study children in context, our knowledge of children will continue to be severely limited [because] young children are more context dependent and context vulnerable than older children and adults". Qualitative research methodologies enable a researcher to investigate human insights and to explain complex human phenomenon in contexts. (Bogdan & Bilken, 1992; Taylor & Bogdan, 1984).
I am interested in tapping information from what I termed earlier the 'reservoir of knowledge', the experiences and the perspectives of the Ethiopian immigrant parents and the experiences and perspectives of the early childhood education teachers about themselves and the experiences of the children supplemented with my own educational and practical experiences. It is from this point of view that I have chosen a qualitative research approach for this study. Furthermore, the fact that a qualitative research approach has been found to be useful in examining children and teacher interaction particularly when teachers and children "come from different cultural backgrounds" (Jacob, 1987, p. 21) also contributed to my choice of a qualitative research approach.

The next question is "what kind of qualitative research method is used in this particular study?". As Merriam (1988, p. 8) writes, what differentiates qualitative case study method most from other qualitative study methods is the fact that it is "bounded" or limited to "an examination of a specific phenomenon such as a program, an event, a person... or social group". My study specifically, examines the experiences of children of first generation Ethiopian immigrant parents. In other words, my investigation is limited to looking at children of a "specific social group", in this case, children of first generation Ethiopian immigrant parents. From this point of view, even though it shares elements from other research methods such as life history and narratives, I would say that my study is based on qualitative case study method.
4.2. RESEARCH DESIGN

4.2.1. THE STUDY SITE

For this study, six early childhood education classrooms were selected from the Metropolitan Toronto area. The criteria for selecting the classrooms included: a) the presence of one or more children of Ethiopian origin in the classroom together with a teacher who was with them during their transitional period from home to ECES; b) permission from the administrative offices of the ECES to allow me to enter the classrooms, interview teachers and conduct observations; c) willingness of the teachers to be interviewed and to allow me to observe their teaching/learning process and the children of Ethiopian origin in their classrooms; d) willingness of the parents.

4.2.2. ACCESS TO THE STUDY SITE

I accessed the study site through the parents. I asked them for the necessary information about the ECES where their children attend and requested them to introduce me to the administrative office of the ECES. After I received approval from the administrative office, I approached the teachers and explained the purpose of my study. The teachers cooperated, allowed me to observe their teaching/learning process in their classrooms and they were willing to be interviewed based on the contents of the letters shown in Appendices E and F.

4.2.3. PARTICIPANTS OF THE STUDY

The participants of this study included six children, six pairs of parents (six mothers and six fathers) and six early childhood teachers. Although these participants were the ones from whom I collected the official data, there were others who directly or indirectly, contributed to the contents of this thesis. One of them was my own granddaughter with
whom I stayed while I read, coded and categorized the transcripts of my interviews. During her five-month stay with me, she taught me how a child of first generation immigrant parents in the early years of life develops.

The second group of children who contributed to the contents of this thesis were the siblings of the targeted children. Whether they liked it or not, some of the parents talked about their experiences with their children who were not directly involved in the study. For example, the transcripts include comments such as: “I did this for this child whereas I did that for her/his brother or sister” or “this child did this while her/his brother/sister did that”.

The third group of children who indirectly contributed to the study were the peers of the Ethiopian children in the ECECS. In this section of the thesis, however, I have only indicated the nature of each group of the study participants (the children, the parents and the teachers) who were officially involved in the study.

4.2.3.1. THE CHILDREN

Six children ranging from four to six years of age participated in this study. Three were females; three were males. Four of the children were first born and two were second born. Though this study is not variable oriented and I did not try to divide and analyse the experiences of the children according to their ages, sexes and birth order, these contexts were more or less reflected in the narratives of the parents and the teachers. The most important criterion in choosing these children, however, was the age they started attending early childhood education programs. Each child was at least two years old when s/he started on early childhood education and care program. It was not an easy task to find such children and as a result it took me time to find them. This criterion was
important because one of the areas that this study looked at is the cultural and the linguistic experiences that these children had as children of first generation Ethiopian immigrant parents before they started attending early childhood education and care programs and its relationship with their experiences in the ECECS particularly during their transition from home to ECES and their adjustment experiences in the ECES.

Although it was not easy, I managed to get five children who were two years and above while they started the ECES programs.

4.2.3.2. THE PARENTS

Although I tried to describe the criteria for selecting the children in a separate section, the criteria for selecting the parents and the children is, certainly, interrelated. I selected the parents from persons I knew in the Ethiopian community in Toronto and from persons referred to me by other people provided that they had children as described in Section 4.2.3.1. For example, for a parent to be a participant in this study, s/he must have a child who started ECES at the age of two or above because I wanted look at the transition of the children from home to ECES after they were familiar with their home culture and language. Another criterion for selecting the parents was to make sure that they were a nuclear family, that is the mother and father were married and living together. I wanted to gain perspectives on the children’s experiences from both parents; however, this does not mean that single parents cannot be a source of information about their children. In fact, in future research it is important to look at the experiences of children from single first generation immigrant parents. Anyway, the other criterion was to have parents who were born and grew up in Ethiopian cultural settings until they were at least eighteen years old. The fourth criterion was to have parents who left Ethiopia for political reasons
and who have the experiences of being refugee. I did this because I wanted to understand the children's experiences not only in relation to being raised by first generation immigrant parents but also as it related to being raised by parents who were refugees. In other words, I wanted to know if the parents' experiences as refugee would influence the way they rear their children. The fifth criterion was their willingness to permit me to learn about the details of their lives through interviews. The final criterion was their willingness to allow me to talk to and observe their children in their homes and in their respective ECECS.

Although I did not look for parents with a particular educational background, it so happened that ten out of twelve parents had college and university education. This is consistent with the statement, in Chapter Two, Section 2.5, which says "the great majority of Ethiopians who left their country due to political upheavals were educated". For more information on the background of the parents see Table 1.

4.2.3.3. THE TEACHERS

The criteria for selecting the six early childhood education teachers in this study were:

a) their willingness to allow me to observe their teaching/learning process and the participant child in their classrooms; b) their willingness to be interviewed and to reflect on issues related to the experiences of children with different cultural and linguistic background in general and the participant children in their classes in particular; c) their training as early childhood education teachers; d) their experiences as a teachers of children with diverse cultural and linguistic background for at least three years; e) their presence during the transition of the participant child from home to ECES. The last was an important criterion in order to get information about the experiences of the children.
during their transition and adjustment periods. Unfortunately since many early childhood education teachers leave their jobs because of the low status and salary or other reasons and because of shifts from one classroom to another classroom, it was not easy to find teachers who were with the participant children right from the start. However, I managed to get three teachers who were with the children during the children’s transition from home to ECES up to the time I did the interview. For more information about the teachers see Table 2.

4.2.4. DATA GATHERING TECHNIQUES

Qualitative researchers use multi-data collection methods to enhance the trustworthiness of the data. It is known as “triangulation” (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). It is a “combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon” (Denzin, 1978, p. 291). I used observation, interviews and focus group interviews as the three main data collecting methods to cross validate the data (Jick, 1979). This section of the thesis provides an overview of the procedures I used in each of the data gathering technique as follows:

4.2.4.1. OBSERVATIONS

Prior to embarking on formal observations, I did two preliminary visits to each home and one preliminary visit to each ECECS. This “impressionistic and informal observation” (Hawkins, 1982, p. 22) helped me where to focus during my formal observations. The pilot interviews with the teachers, the parents and the children also helped me to reorganize some of the interview questions because I was able to see and talk with real people in real situations. Through the pilot interviews, I got to know the children so that they would know me and feel comfortable in my presence both in their
**TABLE 1**
**THE BACKGROUNDS OF THE PARENTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Age-range</th>
<th>Languages</th>
<th>Level of Education</th>
<th>Area of Work</th>
<th>Years in Canada</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Lemlem</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>30-35</td>
<td>Amharic,</td>
<td>College Diploma</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Asefa</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>36-40</td>
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<td>Mekidus</td>
<td>Mother</td>
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<td>Amharic,</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>Social Service</td>
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<td>Belete</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Tewabech</td>
<td>Mother</td>
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<td>Nurses’ aid</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Kidist</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Mesfin</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>41-45</td>
<td>Amharic,</td>
<td>Master’s Degree.</td>
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<td>Nurses’ aid</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Mulu</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>25-30</td>
<td>Guragigna</td>
<td>High School+</td>
<td>Nurses’ aid</td>
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**NOTE:**
Instead of the exact age of the parents or the teachers, the age-range was asked.
homes and in their ECES. In other words, it helped me to have a good start in my relationship with them. Here, it is important to note that since the study is aimed at understanding the experiences of the children through the perspectives of the parents and the teachers, the pilot or other interviews with the children were not formal or structured. Rather, they were informal talk whenever I got the chance of interacting with them.

It was during these preliminary visits that the parents invited me to knock on their doors anytime after work hours, in the evening or during the weekends. As it is part of Ethiopian culture to warmly welcome and treat visitors even if the visitors are strangers, the Ethiopian parents stretched out their arms and opened their hearts to receive me and to make me feel at home and comfortable. Every time I entered their homes for observation or for interviews, I was told to relax and chat for a while. Only after I was given food and Ethiopian coffee, with its full ceremonial rituals was I was allowed to start the formal work of observation or interviewing. But this did not mean that I did not collect data during all these informal conversations, chatting, eating and coffee ceremony.
In fact, I found these informal interviews, informal observations and informal conversations to be a very rich source of data (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984; Merriam, 1992). It was during this time that I was able to access some of the ideas of parents and children as part of my data. Through such informal interactions parents felt comfortable to ask me questions (Oakley, 1981); they shared with me information about the pains that they went through as refugees and the importance they attached to peace, human rights, justice and equality as the result of their experiences as victims of injustice, imprisonment and torture. They shared with me the experiences they had as newcomers in Canada, their feeling toward their extended family back in Ethiopia, childhood memories and their impact on the way they raise their children here in Canada, their expectations from their children, the fears they have for them, the hopes they aspire for them, behaviours they expect from them, books that they would like to read to them and their concern about their present and future lives.

It was also during this time that the children came close to me, touched me, hugged me, kissed me, sat on my lap, asked me questions, allowed me to ask them questions, played with me, told me stories about their experiences at home and at the ECES, showed me their likes and dislikes and expressed their interests in extended family members and asked me if I was a member of their extended family. Their interest in knowing their extended family stood out. For example, three of them asked if I was their aunt; another asked me if I was her grandmother. In short, both the parents and the children were more open and relaxed in talking with me about whatever came to their minds during the informal conversations.

My first plan for the more formal observation technique was to collect data through
observations in the home and ECES by using an open ended observation method, that is by jotting down everything I observed. After I completed my preliminary observations in a home setting, I realized that there were many things to see and many voices to hear which made it almost impossible to jot down everything I saw and heard. I also realized that I could not observe everything in the settings. So I limited my focus to certain issues that I thought were pertinent to the purpose of my study (Boehm & Weinberg, 1997; Merriam, 1988; Trawick-Smith, 1997). Having this in mind, my observations in the home environments were focussed on: a) the physical settings of the home; b) the interactions of the children with their parents and their siblings; c) the language of communication (English or their mother tongue); d) activities of the children; e) materials that they used to learn or to play with; e) stories that parents told to their children, songs they sang to the children and games they played with them.

In the ECES too, the physical environment of the classrooms, the activities that the children do and their interaction with their teachers and peers were observed. Activities related to the children’s cultural and linguistic background were given particular attention. Furthermore, I observed whether the materials in the classrooms reflected or represented different cultures.

Apart from the preliminary visits, I observed the study participants in each ECES three times. These observations averaged three hours. During those times, although I participated in some of the classroom routines by helping the teachers in arranging materials, reading to children and washing or cleaning, most of the time I was “passive and unobtrusive” (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984) by sitting quietly somewhere in a corner of the classroom and taking notes of what was relevant for my study. Since I was observing
the experience of one child in each classroom, this kind of methodology helped me to
follow the individual child and make precise observations. Had I fully participated in the
classroom routines and activities with all the children, I would have missed many of the
things that my study participant was doing. In other words, I acted as “observer as a
participant” (Merriam, 1988, p. 92). This means my participation in the group was
secondary to my role as data collector through observation.

One of the questions I raised about observing children in early childhood in ECECS
was whether my presence mattered to the children. My answer to this question is ‘yes’
and ‘no’. First, during my preliminary visits to the ECES, almost all the teachers
introduced me to the children in the classrooms where I was going to conduct the
observations. The teachers also told the children that I would come to their classrooms
and watch them. That meant that many children knew before hand about my presence in
their classrooms. This reduced their curiosity as to why I was there. When children are
absorbed in their own work or by the work of the teachers in ECECS, unless they hear a
loud noise, they normally do not turn faces around (Montessori, 1973). Instead they
concentrate on their work. So when the children were concentrating on their own
individual and group work, my presence there did not matter. But when they became
bored or when it was time for them to change activities, that is during transitional periods,
some of the children looked at me and whispered to each other wondering why I was
sitting in their classes. Some even came to me and asked what I was doing there. I told
them that I was there to see what they and their teachers were doing. They were satisfied
with my answers and I continued my work of observing. My observations were not
limited to the classroom settings. I accompanied the teachers and the children whenever
they left the classrooms. I had the opportunity to observe the study participants in playgrounds while they were doing different out of doors activities and in the streets while they were out for walks.

4.2.4.2. INTERVIEWS

Interviewing is a common method of data gathering in a qualitative research approach. It allows the researcher and the subject to dialogue about the issues under investigation. Patton (1980, p. 196) reflects on interviewing as follows: "We interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe.... We cannot observe feelings, thoughts and intentions. We cannot observe behaviours that took place at some previous point in time. We cannot observe situations that preclude the presence of an observer.

We cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meaning they attach to the world. We have to ask people questions about those things. The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter into others perspectives". I began by assuming that interviewing my study participants would allow me to learn of the experiences of children of Ethiopian origin in their homes and in their ECES in Toronto, and prepared "semi-structured interview questions" (Cohen & Manion, 1989; Fontana & Frey, 1994). I conducted pilot interviews with a parent and a teacher using those questions. Based on the experience I gained from the pilot interviews, I reorganized the questions as shown in Appendices A and B.

The essence of a semi-structured interview format is that while the interviews are guided by a list of issues or questions to be examined (Patton, 1990), "neither the exact wording nor the order of the questions is determined ahead of time. This format allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging world view of the
respondents, and to new ideas on the topic” (Merriam, 1988, p. 74). The use of a semi-structured interview format enabled me to raise those issues which were pertinent to the participants' emerging concepts, topics and ideas in relation to the purpose of my study. It also enabled me to probe the participants and to enter into their perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, feelings, thoughts, intentions, aspirations and fears.

Semi-structured interviews require the interviewee to be willing and open, to tell, ponder, discuss and to reflect on issues. For this reason, I feared ending up with inadequate information/data because the parents were brought up in a culture where silence, modesty and secrecy were and are highly appreciated and where shyness, particularly for women was and is considered a desirable quality. Although the parents talked with low voices with few words, they were open and expressive enough to make their ideas quite rich with relevant information needed for my study.

I was well aware that the work of early childhood education teachers, particularly day care teachers, consumed both mental and physical energy, as yet unrecognized by many members of society including researchers themselves. For this reason, my second fear was that my request to interview early childhood education teachers would be turned down as they might think that the study would not be relevant to their position as early childhood education teachers. The reverse happened. Both the administrative office of the ECES and the teachers received me warmly and cooperated fully, allowing me to do the interviews and the observations. In spite of the busy nature of their work, the early childhood teachers set aside time so that I could interview them.

I interviewed twelve parents and six teachers. In-depth interviews, interviews with more probing and long lasting, were conducted with three parents and two teachers.
While it took about two hours to interview each of the three parents chosen for the in-depth interviews, the time taken to interview the other nine parents varied from forty-five minutes to one hour. I took about one hour and a half to interview each of the two teachers chosen for in-depth interviews and an average of forty-five minutes to interview the other four teachers. As indicated earlier, the interviews with the children were more informal and took place almost every time I had an opportunity to interact and talk with them. In other words, in my interaction with them both in their homes and in their ECES, I talked with them, joked with them, played with them, asked them questions and made notes of those answers which I thought were relevant to my study. Furthermore, whenever I called their parents for some clarification, the children were interested to talk to me on the telephone. So I used this opportunity to talk to them about issues that had a particular importance to my study.

The interviews with the parents were held in their own homes and were very relaxed. In two of the six homes that I went for interviews, the parents insisted that I was more than welcome to stay in their homes overnight so that we could all have enough time to finish the interviews in one evening. I welcomed their offers because staying overnight helped me not only to do the interviews in more depth but also helped me to gain a general understanding of their household routines, schedules and other information relevant to the daily experiences of the children. For example, I was able to observe how parents told stories to children, what activities the children did most of the time, their sleeping patterns and their eating habits. Staying overnight also enabled me to talk with the parents while they were doing their household chores. For example, I talked with them when they were cooking dinner; I talked with them when I helped them with the
dishes; I talked with them when I sat with them in the dinner table; I talked with them when they were bathing their children. In short, it added to my knowledge of the parents and the children and created more openness between us.

When it came to the place of the interviews with the teachers, the choice of the teachers was considered. One teacher chose to be interviewed in her own home. Another chose to be interviewed at OISE/UT and the rest chose to be interviewed after work hours in their respective ECECS.

4.2.4.3. FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

Since focus group interviews encourage participants to help each other while discussing issues, my plan was to conduct at least two focus group interviews bringing together both the parents and the teachers. But it was not an easy venture to bring both groups together. In both the first and in the second focus group meetings the teachers could not make it due to the crowded nature of their work. However, although the turnout was not that satisfactory parents were present in both meetings. Seven parents attended the first group interview and six parents came to the second focus group interview.

4.2.4.4. REFLECTION NOTES

Reflection notes are one of my data sources. There was no specific method, time or place as to how, when and where I reflected. Most of the time, I thought about ideas and made notes in unexpected places and at unexpected times. For example, I reflected when I was taking showers, while sitting on buses or trains, while watching tv programs, while cooking or making coffee or when eating food and drinking tea and when lying down in my bed at night. Ideas come and go, anytime and anywhere. But the most
important thing was to make note of those ideas. I usually kept my notebook in my handbag. The moment ideas came, I tried to jot them down. In other words, as much as possible, I jotted down my thoughts whenever they came to my mind even if I was in the midst of friends or other people. This was how I came to have what I called "reflection notes" as one of the data sources for my study.

4.2.5. DATA ANALYSIS

Glesne & Peshkin (1992, p. 146) refer to data analysis as "the prelude to sensitive, comprehensive outcomes that make connections, identify patterns and contributes to greater understanding". Its goal is "to come up with reasonable conclusions and generalizations based on a preponderance of the data" (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984, p. 139). It involves categorizing, identifying, classifying, synthesizing, consolidating, sorting, interpreting, explaining, developing theories, searching for themes and organizing so as to make sense of the data that one has collected (Denzin, 1989; Glesne & Pushkin, 1992; Merriam, 1988; Strauss, 1987). In short, it is a process of making sense out of what the researcher has observed, interviewed, read, interpreted and reflected.

In a qualitative research approach, data collection and data analysis go "simultaneously" (Glesne & Pushkin, 1992; Goetz & LeCompte, 1984; Merriam, 1988). This simultaneous data collecting and analysis helps a researcher to focus and shape the study as it advances. In fact, I have a strong belief that data analysis begins right from the start, that is, even during the conceptualization of a study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). While conceptualizing a study, a researcher may need to think about a certain problem or issues that s/he wants to deal with. In doing this, s/he reads literature, observes things,
reflects on past or present phenomenon or talks to people to come up with a clear issue. Understanding such issues involves organizing, interpreting, theorizing, consolidating and analysing what one has read, observed, heard and thought. So data analysis is a part of the whole process of a study (Merriam, 1988).

How did I organize the data I collected for this particular study? The literature suggests various ways of organizing the text of data analysis. Some researchers organize the data analysis on the basis of the data collecting instruments. For example, one may have a chapter of data analysis under the title “interviews” and another chapter under the title “focus group interview” (for example, see Corson, 1998); another researcher may divide her/his data analysis chapters on the basis of the type of the respondents/participants (for example, see Irving, 1997); still other researcher may frame the organization of her/his analysis on the basis of themes/topics (for example, see Nathani, 1996). As Glesne and Peshkin (1992, p. 164) write “probably the most frequently used technique is organization by themes or topics”. This is the technique that I chose in organizing my data analysis chapters and the themes under each of them. Doing this enabled me to consolidate concepts, ideas, themes and theories that emerged from the data collected through different means, that is interviews, observations, reflection notes, relevant literature review notes and my own experiential knowledge.

The next question could be: how did I specifically arrive at the topics and the themes under the data analysis and discussions chapters, that is, Chapters Five, Six and Seven? To start with, I read each data source (interview texts, observation notes, reflection notes, literature review notes) several times to understand their contents. While doing this, I jotted down in the margins words or phrases that I thought would represent concepts,
theories and themes in the contents of the texts that I was reading; I jotted down my own reflections, interpretations, comments, observations and queries; I also kept separate lists of major themes or topics that I thought would cut across many of the ideas in the contents of the data sources. I considered this to be "my first stage of data analysis". In the second stage of my analysis, I carefully read and looked for recurring ideas, concepts and themes. Then I categorized/classified them under major topics like pre-early childhood education experiences, transitional experiences and post adjustment experiences. These topics were derived from the major questions of the study and some of them eventually became the titles of the analysis and discussions chapters. For example, one of the major questions of the study was: How were the experiences of the children at home before they started attending ECES? In other words, how were the pre-ECES experiences of the children at home? In this way the themes and concepts that recurred in the parents' responses to this major question and related sub-questions were listed under the title: "pre-early childhood education setting experiences" which eventually became the title for chapter five. Furthermore, the themes and sub-topics that recurred were organized, categorized, interpreted, analysed and discussed. For example, when the parents discussed their children's early experiences, the issues that they raised included such things as the desire to have children, preparation to receive the newborn, circumcision, christening, breast feeding, sleeping patterns, home language and choice of ECES. As sub-topics of Chapter Five, each of these themes was analysed and discussed on the basis of the parents' narratives supplemented by relevant literature and my own interpretations. The same procedure was used to arrive at the various themes and notions in Chapters Six and Seven.
4.2.6. ETHICAL ISSUES

According to Sieber (1993) "ethics has to do with the application of a system of moral principles to protect harming or wrongdoing others, to promote the good, to be respectful and to be fair" (quoted in Renzetti & Lee, 1993, p. 14). Glesne & Peshkin (1992: 110) also write that "codes of ethics address individual rights to dignity, privacy, and confidentiality, and avoidance of harm". As individuals' right to privacy is important in dealing with ethics, the researcher needs to make sure that the privacy of the participants is "protected and not harmed, deceived, betrayed nor exploited" (Burgess, 1989). The question here was how to tackle the issue of ethics to promote the principles of morality? As the literature suggests (Cole, 1991; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Merriam, 1988; Seidman, 1991), I have been very sensitive to issues of confidentiality, research impact, reciprocity and participants' vulnerability. In doing this, I made sure that the participants' (individuals and institutions) right to privacy was well protected; the participants and I were interested in "collaborating" on the research project (Cole & Knowles, 1993); I respected them and they trusted me; I acknowledged and appreciated their time and collaborative efforts; I was sensitive to the vulnerability of individuals and institutions at every phase of the research project; I assured that the participants were comfortable when raising sensitive issues, that is, I recognized the boundary of probing for further information during in-depth interviews; I informed them that their confidentiality would be maintained and anonymity would be preserved.

As Smith (1990, p. 260) writes, "the two most important principles for the protection of human subjects are informed consent and anonymity". Statements of informed consent, both for the parents and their minor children and the teachers, as shown in
appendices G and H, were prepared and signed. Other than this, before I started to collect data, I made sure that participants were aware that their participation was voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw from the research at any time of the research process. Furthermore, to protect the anonymity of the participants, I used pseudonyms. For more information, please see Appendices E and F.
CHAPTER FIVE
5. PRE-EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION SETTING EXPERIENCES

5.1. INTRODUCTION

This thesis explores the present, past and anticipated experiences of children of Ethiopian immigrant parents in their homes and ECES, mainly, through the perspectives of their parents and teachers. In this chapter, the early experiences of the children before they start attending daycare settings which are termed as "pre-early childhood education settings experiences", are explored. It is important to note that the title "Pre-early Childhood Education Setting Experiences" does not mean that there is no education before the children start attending ECES. In fact, as discussed in Chapter Three, Section 3.3., the home is the first educational and care institution and the parents are the first educators and caretakers of their own children. That means the home is the first early childhood education institution.

Since the parents were the major influence on their children's life before they go to ECES, the data for the chapter was mainly based on the recollection of the parents. The major guiding question was "how did the parents perceive the early experiences of their children prior to their attendance in ECES? While browsing, identifying, categorizing, consolidating, interpreting and theorizing (Denzen, 1989; Glesne & Pushkin, 1992; Meriam, 1988; Strauss, 1987) about the parents' perspectives on the early experiences of their children, I came up with the major concept of "early immersion in the home environments" which includes: circumcision, christening, breast feeding, sleeping patterns and mother tongue/home language. So the major discussion in this chapter
concentrates on these issues. The chapter also indicates the parents' criteria in choosing ECES for their children. I started with the parents' desire to have children and their preparation to receive their newborn babies because a parent's desire to have a child and their readiness to receive the newborn has a "great impact" on the experiences of the child (Collahas, 1974; Mellor, 1966).

5.2. DESIRE TO HAVE CHILDREN

"A beloved and wanted child....is more likely to develop in a balanced and stable manner than an unwanted child" (Mellor, 1966, p. 60)

The above quotation affirms that wanting or not wanting to have children makes a difference to the lives of children. To be a wanted child is to have a positive start in life. All the six pairs of parents said that they really wanted children and their desire to have children was very strong. People want to have children for various reasons. For example, they may want children to continue the family name; they may want to have children to keep their marriage intact; they may want to have children to have someone who can help them during their old age; they may want to have children because they love children; they may want to have children for it is human nature to have one's own offspring; they may want to have children to pass on their wealth. In addition to such reasons, the Ethiopian first generation immigrant parents' reasons for their strong desire to have children included their own experiences of being refugees prior to coming to Canada, the absence of an extended family and the resultant feeling of loneliness that they encountered after coming to Canada. Based on their experiences, most of them believed that first generation immigrant parents with a refugee background have a stronger desire
to have children as compared to non refugee parents. Further research might test or
explore this proposition. The parents also said that their strong desire to have children
made them pay a particular attention to their children, above all. In other words, almost
all the parents emphasized that their strong desire to have children set the stage for them
to do what was possible for their children to provide positive experiences for them. For
example, mother Lemlem who has a college education and presently works as an
administrator in a company said:

My husband and I had a strong desire to have children since we arrived in
Canada. You see, one of our reasons was the fact that we lost our child due to the
hardship we faced while we were in a refugee camp in a neighboring country.
To replace that loss, we terribly needed to have another child. Apart from this,
as first generation immigrant couple we didn’t and still don’t have extended
family. So we felt very lonely. Also, you see, like any other parents we wanted to
have our own offsprings to continue our generation. I think these situations
created our strong desire to have children.... I believe that the strong desire we
have is an impetus that helps us to work hard in our effort to provide positive
experiences to our children. People may think that as refugee we dwell
on our past problems and don’t do much for our children. But that is not true. I mean,
we try to give them the utmost love and physical needs that we could possibly
give to our children. Yes, certainly, Derege was more than a wanted child.
(Mother Lemlem, July, 1999)

Mother Lemlem, presently a mother of two boys, recalls, with tears in eyes, her
terrible experiences of losing a child while she was a refugee in a neighboring country.
She believes that her child died due to lack of sanitation and the crowded nature of the
refugee camp. At the same time, she ponders how lack of peace, justice and inequality
created by power seekers and other society’s ills is a killer of children and a source of
suffering to innocent people particularly to women, children and elderly people. She
believes that when there is a societal problem, children’s lives are always at stake.
Wiping her tears from her face, she also tells how satisfied she is to have two children
whose presence created joy in her heart and mind. Particularly, she stressed how excited,
happy and comfortable she was when she had her first baby. As White (1980, p. 15) writes, “babies are capable of bringing continually rejuvenated excitement into the lives of adults” and I think it is more so for parents with a refugee background. Describing the lives of refugees, Kaprielian-Churchill & Churchill (1994, p. 199) also write that refugees see children not only as a continuation and “sanity of normal life”, but also it is their belief that “children link the past with the future and join memory with hope. To choose to have children is to choose to give meanings to their lives and hopes...”

Father Tasew, a holder of a Master’s degree in culture and theater and who presently owns a small business, also has a more or less similar perspective with that of mother Lemlem as far as desire to have children is concerned:

You know, as soon as we got jobs here in Canada, though our jobs were odd, my wife and I started thinking of having children. First there was the issue of our ages. You see, we got married in Ethiopia quite a long time ago. But we were forced to live separately because of the political problems in Ethiopia. I had to flee from Ethiopia and live in a neighboring country as a refugee whereas my wife had to live alone for five years in Ethiopia. So when we came to Canada, we felt we were getting old and we needed to have children. Not only this, but also we felt lonely as we did not and still don’t have extended family. You know, the immigration process is very tough to bring your extended family here. Thank to God now we have two children. Our children are everything for us. You know, before I had my first son, Tefera, my mind was scattered all over. I was very much home-sick thinking of my parents and my extended families. But after he was born, my mind settled down well. You see, when I come home from work, I found someone to be busy with, to play with and to have fun with. I mean, I found someone whom I considered mine. I would say that he brought health, peace and happiness in me. (Father, Tasew, July, 1999)

The reasons for the strong desire to have children stated by the parents in the two above excerpts are the same reasons given by many of the other parents. In particular, the issue of lack of extended family in their new country, Canada, and the associated loneliness that they felt was stressed by each parent as one of the major reasons for their strong desire to have children. Whatever the reasons for wanting children, the desire to
have children set the stage for parents to do whatever they could for the well-being of their children because as Collahas (1974, pp. 51-52) writes, a parent’s desire for children is not only a source of time, energy and substantial attention to the child but it also “opens the way to spontaneous warmth and enjoyment”. Furthermore, the desire to have children results in a commitment on the part of the parents. Parents’ commitment to rear their children to the best of their capacities is one of the major factors that help children to have a positive start in life (Ambert, 1992). On the other hand, when children come to this world unwanted, their physical, emotional, intellectual and social needs are threatened or placed at risk. The parents’ stories of wanting children reminded me of a woman in Ethiopia who for one reason or another, did not want to have a child, but gave birth to a baby girl by accident. When she named that child she called her ‘Yerasishgudaye’, an Amharic phrase, meaning “it is up to you to exist or not to exist” or “I am not responsible for you because you came to this earth not of my will”. Through names given to their children, parents in Ethiopia express their wishes, their satisfaction or dissatisfaction, their appreciation for something and their respect to God. In this way this woman expressed her frustration by naming her daughter who was unwanted. As a mother, she might do what she could for her daughter, but the psychological impact of the name she used could scar her daughter’s emotional status. Furthermore, since the mother did not want the child, her commitment and stamina to care and educate her would be limited.

The transcripts reveal that the parents in this study had a strong desire to have children, mainly as the result of their experiences as refugees prior to coming to Canada and because they did not have extended family here in Canada and were lonely. They
believed that their strong desire for children was also a driving force to do what they could to lay a positive foundation for their children in terms of caring, loving, educating and socializing. In short, according to the parents’ beliefs, all the six children in this study had the early experience of being wanted, loved, cared for and educated/socialized to the best of their parents’ abilities as first generation Ethiopian immigrant parents.

5.3. PREPARATION TO RECEIVE THE NEWBORN

Societies perform different rituals before birth to welcome newborns. For example, the preparation of a Canstillo, a basket with items that the baby needs, by Hispanic families and the practice of a “baby shower” by North American families are rituals that are performed before birth (de Melendez & Ostertag, 1997). In the cultures of many societies in Ethiopia, the coming of a baby is heralded by preparing special foods. The special foods are not only meant for the new mother’s well being but also for the well-being of the baby. Mother Tewabech, a holder of a college diploma in social work and presently working in a social service agency, reflected on her preparation to receive her newborn in the next page:

Before I gave birth to Tirsit, I mean while I was pregnant, my mother sent me ‘genfo duket’ and ‘bula’ from Ethiopia. I also prepared ‘atmit’ and ‘telba’. You know, probably you can find the most nutritious food in abundance here in Toronto. But you always like the food which you grew up with. Not only this but also my mother used to tell me that this kind of food stuff helps to produce more breast milk for the baby. (Mother Tewabech, 1999)

‘Genfo’, ‘bula’, ‘atmit’ and ‘telba’ are special Ethiopian foods and drinks which are prepared by using the people’s indigenous knowledge and which are believed to be good not only for the health of new mothers but also, as Mother Tewabech indicated, they help
to produce more breast milk for newborn babies. Unlike many parents in Ethiopia, they did not want to stick to the Ethiopian culture that discourages parents from buying things like clothing to receive newborn babies. Most of the parents believed that it was necessary to prepare clothing and other things before birth. For example, Mother Kidist, a holder of a college diploma in architecture and presently studying computer programing states:

If my mother was here, she wouldn’t be happy to see me buying things for my unborn baby because she would have said, "Who knows what will happen to the child?". You know, I also had that fear at the back of my head. In spite of that, however, I was ready to buy clothing, crib and other necessary things as a preparation to receive my baby. But before I did that, my friends bought almost everything for my baby when they organized a baby shower for me. I like a baby shower. I think it is a good culture. There is no such culture as baby shower in Ethiopia. But we have what we call ‘arastiri’ (gifts that family members and friends give to mothers and their babies after they give birth) which is also equally good. (Mother Kidist, 1999)

Many indigenous people in Ethiopia believe that it is not right to buy clothing and other things for babies before they are born. For some people, it is because of the belief that buying things for unborn baby could bring bad luck. For others, it is because one cannot be sure of what will happen to the child during birth. If one prepares many things for the child and the child was to die, there would be so much disappointment for the parents and other family members. To reduce the extent of such disappointment, many people insist on having only a few basic things and instead pray for the mother and the baby to be healthy. However, as Mother Kidist stated and although she had some fear of buying clothing and other things to receive her baby, that was not the kind of culture that she wanted to maintain. She now thought it was important to prepare things to receive her newborn baby and she did so. This indicates that part of what parents do for their children is influenced by their culture in their country of origin and part of it is
influenced by the culture of their new country, Canada.

What is important to note here is that all parents warmly welcomed the birth of their children and prepared what they thought was necessary both for the mother and for the child. In other words, as newborn babies, the six children in my study experienced warmth, love and comfort when they arrived in this world to parents who chose ways of receiving them from the cultures of their country of origin, Ethiopia, and from their new country, Canada.

5.4. EARLY IMMERSION IN THE HOME CULTURE

"Experiences children undergo during their first exposure to the external world are extraordinarily important with respect to their life long development" (White, 1980, p. 2)

As Morgolin (1974, p.7) writes, "the process of socialization, unquestioned by the child in his relationship with his parents, immerses him uncritically in cultural beliefs and traditions". While the children's earliest language experience, that is mother tongue/home language, was the number one experience that was frequently raised and associated with the home culture, other traditional practices influencing the children were also raised by the parents. Amongst these, circumcision, christening, breast feeding and sleeping patterns were recurrently cited. It is important to note that the interactions between first generation Ethiopian immigrant parents and their children and the resultant experiences of these children do not take place in a vacuum. Rather, they take place within social contexts because "each society offers a set of structural constraints and opportunities as well as a cultural content that guide behavior" (Ambert, 1992, p. 68).
The interaction between Ethiopian immigrant parents and their children is influenced by both Ethiopian and Canadian social and cultural contexts; however, the experiences of children in their very early years, particularly before they start attending educational and care settings, are highly influenced by Ethiopian culture.

5.4.1. CIRCUMCISION

According to the tradition of Ethiopian Christianity, boys must be circumcised when they are eight days old and girls have to be circumcised when they are seven days old. In fact, circumcision is one the earliest experiences of infants in many cultural societies of Ethiopia. While the circumcision of boys is fully accepted and practiced, today the tradition of circumcising girls is being challenged by many children’s health educators and activists. However, there still are many places in Ethiopia where girls are circumcised. The Ethiopian immigrant parents in this study condemned persons who practice the circumcision of girls. They do not think that there is any importance to female circumcision. Instead, they believe that it affects the health of girls and of women. They insisted that female circumcision must be abolished by law. On the other hand, they believed that male circumcision promotes health in male children and should be continued. According to them, circumcision promotes cleanliness in boys. So the three little boys in my study were circumcised early in their lives. Recalling her two boys’ circumcision experience in a hospital here in Toronto, Mother Kidist, Tefera’s mother, stated:

Both of my sons were circumcised in a hospital when each one was one day old. The doctors asked me if I was doing the right thing. I told them I was doing the right thing because it is part of my culture. They even gave me and my husband brochures which explained the negative side of circumcision. But we were not convinced. In our culture, boys are circumcised when they are exactly eight days old. I wanted my boys circumcised when they were eight days old as well.

(Mother Kidist, July 1999)
As one may see from the above excerpt, although Kidist's sons were circumcised, she was not satisfied by the rituals of the circumcision because they were not circumcised on the traditionally designated date for circumcision, that is eight days after their birth. This shows how every little detail in a culture matters.

5.4.2. CHRISTENING

Because Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity existed in Ethiopia for over 1600 years, it has become part and parcel of the culture of many people in Ethiopia. It is referred to as the indigenous religion whereas other denominations such as Catholicism and Protestantism, which were introduced in recent times, are referred to as foreign religions. According to the Ethiopian Orthodox Christian religious belief, boys should be baptized forty days after they are born and girls should be baptized eighty days after their birth. Sticking to these dates is important for religious reasons. But, as the parents stated, because the Ethiopian Church in Toronto performs christening rituals once in a week, that is mainly on Sundays, they find it difficult to keep to the designated Christening dates for their male and female children. Mother Lemlem said:

You see, it is difficult to stick to the designated dates of christening because the Ethiopian church in Toronto performs christening rituals once a week. But I am very fortunate that both of my sons were Christened exactly when they were forty days old. It just happened by accident. I felt very happy about it.
(Mother Lemlem, July, 1999)

Although they were not baptized on the designated dates, the other five children were also baptized. According to the Ethiopian church rituals, following the baptism (christening), children are required to take Holy Communion at least for three consecutive days or weeks because it is believed that it will help them to be healthy. In fact, in
Ethiopia Holy Communion is believed to cure people from various illness. If children, under the age of eight or persons over the age of sixty get sick they are taken to church to be given the sacred wine and bread through the rituals of the Holy Communion which is believed will cure them. Many of the parents said that they take their children to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church whenever possible for the rituals of Holy Communion not only because they believe in the power of Holy Communion in contributing to the health of their children but also to adhere to their religion and culture. Some parents even stated that they liked to adhere to their culture in Canada more than they would have done in Ethiopia because if they do not maintain their culture as first generation immigrants now, they fear that their children and grandchildren will experience an identity crisis.

You know if I were in Ethiopia I wouldn’t worry that my children would face an identity crisis and I don’t have to think about culture and language every now and then because naturally it is just there. But here if I don’t try to retain our cultural heritage, I anticipate that my children will experiences an identity crisis. After my daughter was christened, I took her to church for three consecutive weeks so that she could take the Holy Communion. You know, I always ask the question, “if we first generation immigrant parents do not stick to our culture and pass it to our children who will do it?” I think we have the responsibility of passing our culture to our children so that they can also pass it to their children. That is what I say to my friends. You know, that is what I think. I don’t know if it is true for other first generation immigrant parent as well. (Mother Tewabech, July, 1999)

Mother Tewabech believed that when persons are away from their country of origin, they like to maintain the culture of their country of origin. Many of the other parents expressed similar beliefs. For example, Father Arega, a holder of a college diploma in machine operation and who presently works as a machinist, has an immense interest in revitalizing the culture of his old country. He suggested that revitalizing culture in the lives of children should start as soon as they are born, that is when naming them. He explained that although his son was born in Canada, he has an Ethiopian name because he
wanted him to keep his identity as a person of Ethiopian origin. In fact, his and other parents' explanation on the issue of giving Ethiopian names to their children is consistent with Kaprielian-Churchill and Churchill's (1994, p. 9) account which state that "many immigrants who came to Canada voluntarily choose a Canadian sounding name as part of the process of integrating into a new milieu, but the issue is very different for a refugee who had experienced loss of most elements of personal identity". In other words, as this literature suggests, persons who came to Canada as refugees are more interested in revitalizing their culture because of the loss they experienced as compared to families who immigrated voluntarily. Designating children's names with names that reflect the culture of the country of origin is one way of keeping cultural identity for parents with refugee backgrounds. In fact, as Churchill and Churchill (1994, p. 12) emphasize "the experiences of becoming a refugee is one of cultural uprooting and discontinuities, as well, a search for continuity. When refugees flee their countries they experience multiple losses of structures that under normal circumstances sustain their identities". Immigrant people with refugee backgrounds have an immense interest in associating themselves with the culture of their old country of origin. This is reflected in the perspectives of the parents in this study. Many of them strongly believe that first generation immigrant parents should stick to their traditions from their country of origin so that their children will not face an identity crisis later in life. The fact that all the six children in this study have Ethiopian sounding names and were christened in the Ethiopian way reflects the parents' intention of sustaining their culture and protecting their children's identity.
5. 4. 3. BREAST FEEDING

All mothers in this study said that the experiences of being breast fed is an important aspect of young children’s physical, emotional and social development. They stressed the importance of breast feeding in contributing to the bonding between mothers and children. But five of the six mothers were not satisfied with the length of the time they breast fed their children. Except Derege, who was breast fed for one and a half years, for one reason or other, the other five children were breast fed for less than a year and their mothers were not satisfied with what they had done. Even Lemlem, Derege’s’ mother, who breast fed her son for a comparatively longer time was not satisfied as she said:

I breast fed Derege for a year and half. I wish I breast fed him even longer. You see, in North America it is inconvenient to breast feed your child. I mean, you can’t breast feed your child in any place you want to breast feed. There are designated places for breast feeding. You know, sometimes mothers and their children are thrown out of a public area to an isolated area for the purpose of breast feeding. You feel as if you have committed some kind of crime when you are isolated in designated areas. I think children should be breast fed freely. You know, my mother told me that I was breast fed for three years. She fed me until she got pregnant with my younger brother. (Mother Lemlem, July, 1999)

As Lemlem stated, breast feeding children for quite a long time is very normal in Ethiopia and there is no designated place for breast feeding. As indicated earlier, a mother can breast feed her baby anytime, anywhere, whether in public or in private. As in many other African countries, people in Ethiopia believe that the breast is a natural gift for children and is “in no way related to sex”(Dei, 1994). In other words, the breast does not belong to anybody except as a source of milk for the child. This is what Kidist, Tefera’s mother also commented:

I don’t think that breasts are sexual objects as they are considered by some people here in North America. I think they are made by nature to feed young offspring. (Mother Kidist, August, 1999)
In fact, directly or indirectly, this view was clearly expressed by the other mothers as well. Although breast feeding lasts long in Ethiopia, it does not mean that the children do not eat other food. In fact, they start eating semi-solid food around the age of six months. It is in addition to the food that they are breast fed.

The mothers in this study said that as their children got older, around the age of six months, in addition to breast milk they give them solid food like cereals or other children’s food prepared in the Ethiopian way. Around the age of one year and half, children eat Ethiopian spicy food such as ‘shuro fitfit’ and ‘injera and wot’, Ethiopian food with spice and pepper. In other words, before the children started ECES, they were used to eating Ethiopian spicy food.

5.4.4. SLEEPING PATTERN

Traditionally, infant children in Ethiopia sleep with their mothers or other care takers. Eight out of the twelve Ethiopian parents in this study believed this increases love and bond between the care giver and children. They also pointed out that it creates a feeling of security in the child. That is, infant children feel secure when they sleep with their mothers. In fact, Mother Lemlem and Father Asefa pointed out that their son, Derege slept with them as an infant. Four pairs of parents indicated that although they had separate beds for their infant children, they did not want them to sleep alone in another room. Instead, they placed the children’s cribs or beds in their own bedroom so that the children would not sleep alone. These parents explained that keeping their children’s beds in their own room not only gave them easy access but it also enabled their children to feel more secure than when they sleep in a room by themselves. All the mothers in this study also said that they used the Ethiopian way of soothing children to send them to sleep. For
example, Mother Asegedech said that she used to send her daughter to sleep by carrying her on her back and covering her with a netela, a sheet of hand woven Ethiopian cloth. Most of the time, care givers pat the back of children and sing some Ethiopian soothing songs and rhymes: ishuru, ru, ru, ru, mamuye ish ru, ru... when they send them to sleep.

5.4.5. MOTHER TONGUE/HOME LANGUAGE

As Brunner (1983, p. 27) writes, “an enormous amount of the activity of the child during the first year and a half of life is extraordinarily social and communicative”. Actually, “a baby begins to talk at the very moment of birth” (Lewis, 1978:48) when s/he utters the first cry. All the parents in this study also believed that the major pre-early childhood education settings experiences of their children in their home environment had to do with communication. Although all these parents are bilingual, that is could speak English and their mother tongue, they all said that the only language they spoke with their infant children at home before they placed them in ECES was their mother tongue. They pointed out that it was not only easier for them to communicate in their own mother tongue but also they wanted to retain the culture from their country of origin through using their mother tongue. Mother Mekdus who has a high school education and is presently on maternity leave from her work stated:

I strongly believe that if my child could speak my language which is Amharic, she would also know the Ethiopian culture. You know, the daily conversation I had with Bethelihem when she was an infant, the lullaby I sang to soothe her, the finger play I played with her, the rhymes I sang to her and the games I played with her were all in Ethiopian language, Amharic. When Bethelihem was an infant, I mean when she was about one year and half, she understood what I used to say to her. Even she spoke words like “come”,” go” and “give me”. You see, she used to say “peek a boo” in Amharic. I can’t tell you how fascinated and interested she was when I sang Ethiopian rhymes and played finger play with her at that early age. (Mother Mekidus, Sept, 1999)

Apart from communicating in one’s own language, “families of different cultures
adopt unique methods for playing with, carrying, feeding, comforting, educating and socializing children" (Trawick-Smith, 1997, p. 577). This is what one could conclude from Mother Mekidus's explanation of her daughter, Bethelihem's early experiences in the home environment. Many of the other parents also pointed out how they played, soothed and sang in the Ethiopian way. But the question is "do experiences such as these have an impact on the transition of their children from home to ECES? Chapter Six addresses this question.

Reading was another area of activity that the parents in this study stressed while explaining the early experiences of their children in the home environment. Father Mesfin, who is a holder of a University degree, believed that early reading activities with infants is a very important step in preparing children to be better readers in the future. This is what Cameron (1989) also says. Father Mesfin explained that when his daughter, Selamawit, was five months old, he used to hold her on his lap and read her baby picture books. But he pointed out that there was a lack of baby picture books written in the Ethiopian language and cultural contexts. He also pointed out about the lack of Ethiopian children's rhymes which must be addressed in the future. Mother Kidist stated similar concern:

I wish we had picture books for infants and older children written in the Ethiopian cultural contexts. If possible it would be more useful if the books were written both in Amharic and in English (she means bilingual books) specially for the older children. We had and we still have a lot of children's books at home. But they are all written in English. The other thing is that we don't have collections of Ethiopian children's songs and rhymes. I mean, I tell you if we had books and collections of Ethiopian nursery rhymes in Amharic, it would have helped us in our endeavor to sustain our mother tongue. If we don't sustain our mother tongue as first generation immigrant parents who will? I think people who are concerned about children like you and the Ethiopian Community should work hand in hand in preparing children's books and other things that could help to revitalize our culture. (Kidist, July 1999)
Actually, the lack of children’s books and children’s rhymes in the Ethiopian language were the concern of every parents in this study. So Mother Kidist’s message in the above excerpt is worthy of note not only by the Ethiopian Community in Toronto and other places where Ethiopian immigrants reside, but also by individuals like myself who are concerned about children and in sustaining Ethiopian heritage amongst Ethiopian immigrants.

Shigaki (1987, p. 120) writes that “language is an important vehicle for the transmission of values even in infancy and toddlerhood”. It seems that the Ethiopian first generation immigrant parents have also realized the importance of language in transmitting Ethiopian values. Almost all of them believe that knowing their mother tongues would help their children in the future to know and appreciate the cultures, the values and the history of their country of origin which, in turn, will promote pride and self-esteem. In other words, these parents are interested in speaking their mother tongue with their infant children because they want to revitalize the culture and the language of their country of origin. For this reason, they spoke, they read, sang and played with their children in their mother tongue. This means that before these children went to ECES, they heard, spoke, sang and played in their mother tongue.

5.5. CHOICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION SETTINGS

When discussing their choice of ECES for their children, most of the parents stated that like any other parents, they considered the location, the suitability of the rooms, the safety, the cleanliness, the materials, the way the children are fed and the qualification of
the teachers. In addition to these, for some parents, the racial mix of the children and the teachers was a criteria in their choice. Mother Mekdus explained:

When choosing a day care for our daughter, my husband and I looked at the location, we looked at the suitability of the classrooms, we looked at the materials in the classroom and we looked at the qualification of the teachers. But as parents of different cultural, linguistic and racial background, our other criteria in choosing a daycare for our daughter (Bethelihem) was to see how the children in the day care were mixed (black, white and Asian children) because we did not want our daughter to feel lonely. Not only this, but also sometimes little kids say words which have some elements of racism, you know. We want her to see children of her own color. We looked to see if there were black and white teachers as well. (Mother Mekdus, Sept., 1999)

In fact, Mother Mekdus’s fear evoked in my memory a black girl in the ECECS where I was working. At one time, I had only one little black girl who was a four year-old while all the others were white. We were sitting around a big round table and were playing a counting game. All the children were requested to place their hands on the table and count their fingers. Suddenly, a little boy shouted: “Look! her hands are black”. The black girl took her hand off the table and became very sad with tears on her face. I went to her and asked: “What happened”? Her response was: “He says only my hands are black. Why are only my hands black?” I then called all children and started talking about how every color, black, white, red, yellow and blue is beautiful. So Mother Mekdus’s concerns that her daughter might feel lonely and different from others in her classroom has a kernel of truth. Father Arega also believed that placing children in a multicultural settings not only helped them to feel comfortable as part of a group, but also lay the foundation of knowing how to live together with people of different racial and cultural backgrounds.

Another mother recalled her friend’s five year-old daughter’s experiences in an ECECS in an European country. According to her story, the five-year old girl’s father
was white and her mother was black. The little girl had a light colored skin such that other children in that age group would not have recognized that she was black. Her father always dropped her off and picked her up. But one day, the mother went to the ECECS to pick up her daughter. The little girl who was playing with her friends said, “Here is my mom. I need to go”. One little child stared at her mom and said, “Look!! her mom is black”. Other children followed her and made similar comments. The little black girl was very upset. On her way back home, she asked her mom, “Mom why are you black? All the other kids have white moms”. The mother could not answer her question and became upset herself. The question did not end there. When the father came home, he was asked by the little girl was “Dad why did you make my mom black? Your mom is white. Why mine is black? That is not fair!”. That was not an easy issue for the father.

As Ramsey (1996, p. 18) writes, “children are not color blind. Infants notice racial cues, and by the age of three or four most children have a rudimentary concept of race… and can accurately apply socially conventional labels of “black” and “white” to pictures, dolls and people”. In her research report on gender and race issues in ECECS, Derman-Sparks (1993/94) explained how she witnessed a three-year old child refusing to hold the hand of a black child; she witnessed a five year old boy saying, “you can’t play with them because they have Chinese eyes”. The question is “are these the voices of these children”? The answer is: “absolutely not”. Children whether they are white, black and brown in color are innocent, harmless and loveable. But they all absorb the voices of others around them and echo back those voices (Derman-Sparks (1993/94)). Siraj-Blatchford (1994, p. 4) also emphasizes that children “learn not only from what we intend to teach but from all of their experiences. If black people are treated differently from
white people (or if white people are treated differently from black people) then children will absorb the differences as part of their world view." When the innocent little black girl mentioned above told her dad that it was not fair to make her mom black, the idea did not come from her, but it was a reflection of what she sensed around her.

However, fear of elements of racism is not the concern of the majority of the parents in this study. Many of them believe that what is important is to instill pride in their children's mind for who they are from early on. Father Mesfin has to say this:

I don't think racism is a problem for me or for my children. If someone is a racist, in terms of color or other thing, it is his problem. I think his idea of racism emanates from his own ignorance of not knowing that human-beings are human-beings regardless of their colors or other things. What is important for me as a parent is to prepare my children to have full confidence in themselves and do their best in their society. (Father Mesfin, July, 1999)

The account of the parents which indicated that they had fear of elements of racism in their children's future experiences was based on stories that they heard from others and not from stories that their children experienced. In other words, the parents' narrative did not indicate that the six children in this study experienced elements of racism.

5.6. SUMMARY

The parents demonstrated that their children's experiences were interconnected with their own experiences both before and after coming to Canada. For example, their experiences as refugees and their lack of extended family and the associated loneliness they felt here in Canada created in them a strong desire to have children. This strong desire, in turn, motivated them to do whatever they could as first generation Ethiopian immigrant parents to lay a positive foundation for their children in terms of care, love,
socialization and education. The parents' stories also showed that as part of their own early experiences, their children were immersed in the culture, religion and language of Ethiopia. For example, they were spoken to and read to in Amharic, Ethiopian national language; they were sung to, soothed to sleep, told rhymes, played games with and fed all of which of Ethiopian culture and tradition. The boys were circumcised and all the children were christened in the Ethiopian way. Furthermore, they told of their strong intention to revitalize their culture from their country of origin, Ethiopia, so that their children would not face an identity crisis in the future. For this reason the absence of children's books and children's rhymes that reflect the history and the culture of Ethiopia is a significant concern.

The question is: could some of the pre-early childhood education setting experiences of the children in their home environment have any impact on their experiences during their transition from home to ECES? The answer to this question is “yes”. The details are found in Chapter Six.
CHAPTER SIX
6. FROM HOME TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION SETTING

6.1. INTRODUCTION

Although I have defined the phrases ‘baitawar children’ and “native children’ in Chapter One, I would like to clarify them so that they might not sound strange to readers when the terms are used repeatedly. Rather than writing a long phrase: “children whose home language and culture are different from the language and the culture of ECES” every now and then, I preferred to use one word that represents the phrase. But I could not come across an English word that corresponds to it. So I decided to use an Amharic, Ethiopian national language, word ‘baitawar’. ‘Baitawar’ in Amharic refers to someone who is not familiar with the people and the situation of a place when s/he comes across it for the first time. So, in this context, when I say ‘baitawar’ children, I am referring to children whose home language and culture are different from the language and the culture of the ECES when they come across it though temporarily. Similarly, instead of stating the long phrase: “children whose language and culture are similar with the culture and language of the ECES”, I have used the word ‘native’ to denote children whose home language and cultural background are more or less similar to the language and the culture of the ECES. As indicated in Chapter One, Section 1.7, it is important to note that ‘native’ children in this study does not refer to Aboriginal children. With regard to the definition of ‘baitawar’ children also it is important to note that it is not my belief that all ‘baitawar’ children are the same. Apart from language and culture, there could also be differences among them due to class, ethnicity, race and gender. I believe that there is
diversity within diversity. In other words, I go with Bernhard’s (1995, p. 424) idea of “diversity as fundamental heterogeneity”, that is ‘baitawar’ children can be heterogenous. But the thing is, in this particular study, the issue of race, ethnicity, class and gender are not dealt with. The emphasis is on language and culture. Issues of race, ethnicity, gender and other factors that may influence children’s transitional and adjustment experiences may need to be dealt in future research.

There are points of convergence and divergence in these two phrases, that is, ‘baitawar children’ and ‘native children’. Both ‘baitawar’ children and ‘native’ children undergo the transition from home to ECES although the way they experience the transition differs. The core difference between the two groups of children is that while ‘baitawar children’ are children whose cultural and linguistic backgrounds are different from the cultural and linguistic background of the teachers, the other staff and most of the other children in the ECES, ‘native children’ are those children whose cultural and linguistic background are similar to the cultural and the linguistic background of the teachers, other staff and most of the other children in the ECES.

This chapter explores the recollection of the parents and the teachers on the past transitional and adjustment experiences of the ‘baitawar’ children. Particularly, the teachers were asked to describe the transitional experiences of ‘baitawar’ children in general as compared to the transitional experiences of ‘native’ children. Although the analysis in the present chapter is mainly based on the parents’ and the teachers’ perspectives, it is also supplemented with my own experiential recollection which I gained from working with both ‘baitawar’ children and ‘native’ children.

I have divided the transitional experiences of the ‘baitawar’ children from home to
into two major phases: "the phase of transition" and "the phase of adjustment".

The phase of transition is the period during which the 'baitawar' children cry, scream and are distressed. The second phase, "the phase of adjustment" is the period during which the 'baitawar' children try to be part of the classroom group, the language and the daily routines of the ECES.

Overall, the teachers and the parents believed that although it is temporary, 'baitawar' children experience greater intense uneasiness or greater difficulty during their transition from home to ECES as compared to 'native' children. Their narratives also show that the major reason for this is that their language and their culture are different from the language and the culture of the ECES. However, it is important to note that this study is not suggesting that the immersion of children of immigrant parents in their language and culture prior coming to ECES is disadvantageous. Rather, it is to promote sensitivity on the part of parents, teachers and other educators so that they pay particular attention to the way they handle the transitional experiences of 'baitawar' children so that practical techniques are investigated which could help to deal with the issue. In fact, using the theory of second language acquisitions (Cummins, 1979; 1985; 1986; 1996; Dotsch, 1992; Feuerverger, 1994), immersion of children in their home language and culture improves their future educational success. Based on the data gained from the teachers, parents and my own experiences, my suggestion is that as educators we need to recognize that the transitional experiences of 'baitawar' children from home to ECES is more difficult than that of 'native' children. This means that teacher training and parenting programs need to pay particular attention to the transitional experiences of 'baitawar' children to enable teachers and parents to be prepared to handle the situation effectively.
6.2. THE PHASE OF TRANSITION

In many cases, when young children between eight months to three and a half years of age separate from their parents or primary care-givers and encounter a “strange situation”, that is new people and a new environment, they experience what is known as “separation anxiety” (Ainsworth, Bleher, Waters & Wall, 1978; Bowlby, 1970). One of the reasons for experiencing separation anxiety is their attachment to their care-givers. What is attachment? Attachment is “an emotional tie between people” (Reber, 1985, p. 63). The behavior that children display as the result of their separation from their primary care-givers is known as “attachment behavior” (Ainsworth, Bleher, Waters & Wall, 1978; Bowlby, 1970). These behaviors include such things as crying, being frustrated, getting scared and being distressed. However, when Ainsworth, Bleher, Waters, & Wall (1978, p. xiii) undertook studies about children’s attachment behavior in Baltimore and Uganda, the “strange situation” was designed in such a way that it was “appropriate to the kind of experiences that an infant in that particular society encounters in real life”. In other words, even though the infants in Ainsworth, Bleher, Waters and Wall (1978) study encountered new people and a new environment, the language and culture in the new situation were not different from their home languages and cultures. In other words, I believe that the children in Ainsworth, Bleher, Waters & Wall’s (1978) study are like the children whom I referred to as ‘native’ children. The question is could the transitional experience of ‘baitawar’ children and ‘native’ children be the same?

In investigating this issue, the guiding question raised with both the parents and the teachers was: how do you explain the early experiences of so and so during her/his early transition from home to ECES? In response to this question, Mother Lermlem recalls her
Derege was able to understand and say many words in Amharic when he started daycare. His experience on the first day of his entrance to the daycare was terrible. I tell you, the moment we entered the classroom, he started crying and screaming. When I took him on the second day he refused to go down from me clinging on my chest and screaming so loud. I had to sit in the classroom for the whole day having him on my lap for about five days. After that the teacher told me to leave the room so that he could get used to stay by himself. It was very difficult for me to leave him being sad and frustrated. The moment I left the classroom and stood outside listening, he screamed so much, banged himself on walls, run toward the door and struggled to open. I went back to the classroom. But he did not stop crying and screaming. The teachers were trying their best to soothe him and calm him down. But it was not easy. Well, I don't recall how long it took him to settle down. But I think it was a very long time, probably more than a month. (Mother Lemlem, July, 1999)

Teacher Susan who was Derege's teacher said that although she did not recall the details of his transitional experiences from home to ECES, like many other children whose home language and culture were different from the culture and the language of the ECES, it took him quite a while to settle down.

The recollections of three other parents, Father Mesfin, Father Tasew and Mother Mekidus were similar to Mother Lemlem; however, Mother Mekidus's description of the transitional experiences of her daughter, Bethelihem, was different in a sense that her daughter did not cry on her first day at the daycare:

On her first day at the daycare, Bethelihem was fine, I mean she did not cry at all. As soon as we entered the classroom she ran to the slide in the classroom and started sliding and playing. She did not give any attention to anything else. She seemed so relaxed and excited. The teacher told me to stay in the classroom and I did. She kept on playing well running here and there and saying words in Amharic. On that first day, she was very happy and I was happy too although she refused to eat and have a nap. May be she was so busy playing. On the second day too, she was fine in the morning. But in the afternoon, she started getting unhappy and cried. I tried to comfort her but it did not work. The teacher also tried to comfort her but she screamed even more. I had to take her home. On the third day, I tell you she was distressed and devastated. She screamed so much clinging and sticking on me. She did not want to leave me and play as she did on her first day. I think it took her over three weeks to calm down a bit. I felt so bad myself because I thought it was my fault. I mean, I felt that I did not
prepare her for daycare. Yes, it was so hard not only for her but for me too.  
(Mother Mekidus, Sept., 1999)

Teacher Jeanette, Bethelihem’s teacher also recalls that although Bethelihem was fine at first, as some children do, she started crying and screaming later and continued to cry non-stop for many days like many other children of similar backgrounds. Father Belete’s report with regard to his daughter, Tirsit’s transitional experience was similar to Mother Mekidus’ report.

From the narratives of the parents and the teachers and my own observations while working with ‘baitawar children’, some of the children cry for only a day or two and go on to play well without further frustrations. Father Arega’s recollection on his son’s transition from home to ECES support this notion:

You know, Binyam cried a little bit when he entered the classroom. But soon he started playing well. I did not have to stay in the classroom for more than half a day. You see, at that time he did not speak English. He only spoke Amharic. But you know, when I picked him at the end of his second day, his teacher told me that he did not cry and he went on very well throughout. I think he is a very easy going child. I was happy to hear that. (Father Arega, August, 1999)

The teachers also indicated that although some ‘baitawar children’ did not pass through intense uneasiness or intense difficulties during their transition from home to ECES, the majority of such children do.

When I reviewed the narratives of the parents and the teachers describing what the ‘baitawar’ children did during their transitions from home to ECECS, what recurred and was stressed included words/sentences that are used to describe ‘native’ children’s attachment behaviors. As analyzed and described in Section, 6.2.1., the difference is in the intensity of their cry, distress, frustration, etc., and the timing, that is the way ‘baitawar’ children display such behaviors is so intense and last longer as compared to the
way ‘native’ children experience. When the teachers and the parents narrated the situation of ‘baitawar’ children during their transitions from home to ECES, their recurring words and sentences included: the children cried and screamed a lot; they were so frustrated, distrustful and uncomfortable; they lacked social response such as smiling; they lacked interest in playing; for a long time they resisted and protested being separated from their parents by clinging to them; they showed their frustration by banging on doors, by rolling on the floor or by showing temper tantrums; their interactions with the teachers and other staff were almost none, that is they found it difficult to establish any relationship with the teachers and other staff; they kicked and pushed the teachers when they came toward them; they threw toys around them and refused to play with them; in the absence of their parents they sought refuge somewhere in the corner of the rooms, alone with sadness and tears on their faces; they became very withdrawn and very shy; they were very slow to warm up; they were very scared to get involved and mix up; they ran towards their parents repeatedly when they tried to leave them; they seemed confused as to what to do, that is sometimes they wanted to stay in the classrooms while at other times they refused to stay there. Although such behaviors seem similar to the kind of behavior that many children experience when they separate from their care-givers and are placed in a new situations, as indicated earlier the difference is in the intensity of behaviors and the time taken to settle in the ECES.

Almost all the teachers believed that in addition to the separation anxiety, the children’s inability to understand the language of the ECES contributes to the intense uneasiness/intense difficulty of many of the ‘baitawar’ children during their transition from home to ECES; The teachers’ narratives also show that many children who started
mixing and playing on the first two or three days, declined to mix and play when they paused and listened to the language that the teachers and other children were speaking and as a result, their feelings of uneasiness became more intense; they also stated that for some reasons or others a few ‘baitawar’ children cry for a day or two and then adapt well. However, as indicated earlier, it is important to note that it may not be only the language and the culture that make differences in the way the children behave during their transition. Since ‘baitawar’ children cannot be homogenous, there may be ethnic, class, racial and gender differences that could influence the way the children behave during their transition and adjustment.

In general, preparing the ‘baitawar’ children for transition from home to ECES will help to ease the transitional experiences. I asked the parents if they tried to prepare their children for transition from home to ECES. Almost all of them said that what they prepared was the things that the children needed in the day care such as bags, bottles, blankets and toys that the children liked most. They did not make other preparation that they thought would help to ease their children’s transition from home to ECES. Particularly, those parents who took their children to daycare for the first time, said that they did not expect that their children would cry for so long, that is, they thought that they would cry for a while and then stop.

Pre-transitional preparation such as familiarizing the children with basic English words and songs that are common in ECES and arranging repeated visits to the ECES where the ‘baitawar’ child will join can contribute to ease the transitional experiences from home to ECES. In Toronto there are numerous parenting centers run by Toronto Board of Education where parents and children can go and socialize themselves with each
other. So prior to taking children to ECES, enabling ‘baitawar’ to participate in these centers, in the presence of their parents, would have helped the children to be familiar with the culture and the language of the centers which in turn would have helped to ease their transition from home to ECES. I believe that taking children to parenting centers is a great stepping stone toward easing the transitional experiences of ‘baitawar’ children from home to ECES. But none of the parents went to such parenting centers. So five of the six ‘baitawar’ children in this study went through an intense uneasiness during their transition from home to ECES; however, the good thing is that all of these feelings of frustration, tension and intense uneasiness of ‘baitawar’ children are temporary. Whether this may have long lasting impact on the children is open for further research. After children adjust to the situations in ECES, they really enjoy being part of it. Many of them form a strong attachment to their teachers, their peers and the classrooms situations in general and at times they even refuse to go home at the end of the day. But it is important that parents and teachers know the techniques of dealing with such children and their intense uneasiness during the transitional period.

6.2.1. TRANSITIONAL EXPERIENCES OF ‘BAITAWAR’ AND ‘NATIVE’ CHILDREN: DIFFERENCES

When the teachers explained about the transitional experiences of ‘baitawar’ children, they often compared them with the experiences of ‘native’ children. In so doing, they said that the experiences of ‘baitawar’ children in terms of displaying behaviors such as the ones described in Section 6.2 were more intense and lasted longer as compared to the experiences of ‘native’ children. As indicated earlier, like ‘native’ children, ‘baitawar’ children experience separation anxiety. According to the narratives of the teachers, their separation anxiety, however, is compounded by their unfamiliarity with the language and
the culture of the ECES which makes their transition from home to ECES more difficult as compared to children who are familiar with the language and the culture of the ECES.

Teacher Susan commented:

Children who don't speak the language of the daycare and who are from different cultural backgrounds, experience more uneasiness during their transitional period from home to daycare as compared to children who can speak the language of the daycare. You see, such children don't understand what we say and we don't understand what they say. Sometimes, we as teachers find it difficult to help them and that makes the matter worse. But when you know the language and the culture of a child, it is easier to help him and make him feel better. That I think makes the difference. (Teacher Susan, May, 1999)

Based on their experiences, almost all the teachers agreed that the severity and the pervasiveness of 'baitawar' children's distress were greater when compared to the disturbance and distress of 'native' children. In other words, the transitional experiences of the 'baitawar' children in this study, that is their frustration, their distressfulness, their cry for their parents, the pattern of their screaming, their resistance and protest of separation from their parents were much, much more intensified and lasted longer as compared to the experiences of 'native children'. In explaining the reason for this, Teacher Mary and Teacher Barbara pointed out that the situation was compounded with the children's unfamiliarity with the language and the culture of the ECES and often times, the distressful experience of 'baitawar' children was so uncomfortable that could last up to three weeks or more. In general, the teachers reported that like many other children with similar linguistic and cultural background, children in this study experienced intense uneasiness or intense discomfort during their transition from home to ECES. As indicated earlier, it is important to note that the unfamiliarity of the children with the language and culture may not be the only reasons since factors such as class, race, gender and ethnicity also might play role in making differences in the children's
6.2.2. FRUSTRATIONS OF THE THREE PARTNERS
CHILDREN, PARENTS AND TEACHERS

As I sensed from the parents’ and the teachers’ narratives and from my own experiences of dealing with ‘baitawar’ children, it was not only the children who were in difficulty during the transitional period from home to ECES, but so were all the “three primary partners” (McKIM, 1993), the children, the teachers and the parents. In other words, it was not only the children who experienced intense uneasiness or intense difficulties and distress during the transition from home to ECES, but the parents and the teachers also were frustrated while trying to help the children settle to the ECES. For example, Mother Asegedech explained how she and her daughter had difficulties during the transitional period from home to ECES:

Right from the start, Selamawit screamed so intensely, banged herself on the door many times, refused to play with the children in the daycare and protested separating from me for about a month. Her smile and playfulness disappeared. Seeing this situation made me to cry and get frustrated almost every day. I think it may be because she did not understand the language of the teachers and other children. You know, I wanted her to know my language. That is why I did not talk to her in English before I placed her in the daycare. But on the other hand, I felt so guilty because I thought I did not prepare her for daycare. I even cried many times. (Mother, Asegedech, June 1999)

As one may see from the above account, Mother Asegedech was full of contradictions and tensions. On one hand, she felt guilty and frustrated for not speaking English with her daughter at home before she started ECES. On the other hand, she wanted her daughter to know her home language. That meant that she was also in difficulty with feelings of guilt, thinking that she was responsible for her daughter’s situation during the transitional period. As Collahas (1974, p. 53) writes, “parental frustration and a sense of failure arise ... easily if parents think that they are responsible for every reaction of the child".
This is what happened to Mother Asegedech and to many of the other parents in this study who reported similar feelings.

Teachers also experienced a sense of failure when they thought that they were not adequately prepared to help such children. We can observe this from what Teacher Jeanette stated:

I think, dealing with new children whose home language and culture are different from the language and the culture of the early childhood education settings is a lot demanding and at times frustrating to me as a teacher. For example, there are times during which I experience a sense of failure when I feel that I am not able to stop such children from crying and prolonged stress. In my belief, there is no more unhappy occasion for a teacher than seeing little children with sad and crying faces in early childhood education classroom settings for quite a long time. So, I think, it is not only the children who get distressed but sometimes we as teachers get frustrated especially when we feel that we are unable to help them. You know, what you say to them and how you comfort them sometimes does not give them any meaning because it may be different from what they are used in their homes. (Teacher Jeanette, July, 1999)

Teacher Jeanette’s explanation is consistent with Cunningham and Anderson (1999, p. 13) who wrote: “no matter how well you know the majority language, it can be difficult to talk, to sing, to play and to comfort a tiny baby in that language”. In other words, when young children of early childhood age come to classroom situations where they are not familiar with the language and the style of social interactions, the teachers’ talking, reassuring and comforting in their own language could be meaningless to the children (Brown, 1979; Saracho & Spodek, 1983). Bernhard, Lefebvre, Chud and Lange (1995) insist that early childhood education teachers must be well prepared to be able to deal with children whose language and culture are not similar to their own.

From the account of the parents, the teachers and my own experience working with children of similar backgrounds, I divide ‘baitawar’ children into three groups on the basis of their transitional experiences. The first group includes those children who start
crying from the moment they enter the ECECS and continue to cry, scream and feel uncomfortable for a long time. I believe that these children not only do not want to be separated from their parents but also are quick to detect the strangeness of the classroom's human and non-human environment as soon as they enter in it. I refer to them as "early detectors" because they are very sensitive right from the beginning. In fact, the more they hear children and teachers communicating in a language that they do not understand, the more they cry and scream. Based on her mother's account, Selamawit is an example of such children because she started crying right from the start and continued to do so for quite a long time.

The second group includes those children who run toward educational and play materials from the moment they enter the classroom settings and start playing without any inhibition. Usually, such children continue to be active and interactive with the teachers and other children for a day or more. They do not seem to mind anything around them and are unaware of what other children and teachers are doing and saying. These children get excited with the play materials in the classrooms. They talk a lot in their own languages. They even seem to tell stories to teachers and other children in their mother tongue. For example, Teacher Jeanette recalled how Bethelihem told her things in her language though she could not understand what she was saying. Father Zewdie also remembered how his daughter, Bethelihem, was happy and interactive on the first and the second day of her entrance in the early childhood education settings and how he himself as a father felt happy and comfortable when he saw his daughter playing in her first day of school. He also recalled how bad he felt while he saw his daughter started crying after being quite interactive and playful for a day or two. As some of the teachers in this study
explained, the problem for such children becomes so intense when they pause and listen carefully to what the teachers and other children say. Especially, when they detect or realize that the children and teachers are not responding to what they are saying, they usually stop playing and interacting; they stop any kind of exploratory behaviors and sit or stand quietly with a sad face and finally start crying non-stop. They search for their parents and scream. They run toward the doors and try to leave the classroom environment. They bang themselves on doors and walls. Sometimes, teachers have to call their parents who have already left the classroom and who thought that their children had adjusted well. The children then become suspicious and constantly alert in making sure that the primary care-giver, that is the mother or father, is in the classroom. I refer to this group of children as “late detector children” because when they first come to the ECECS they are interested in the play materials and begin playing without paying attention to what other children and teachers are saying and doing until they pause and listen to the language that the teachers and the children use. They also realize that when they talk or ask something in their home language, no one understands them. It is then that they get up upset.

The third group are those children who easily adapt to the situations. Even if they cry, they cry for a short period of time and then feel comfortable easily. For example, out of the six children in this study, child Biniyam did not cry and scream for a long time. While working with children of similar backgrounds, I have also come across a few ‘baitawar’ children who easily adapted to the classroom situations within few days. There were also children who even did not cry at all. Whenever I came across such children, I used to ask their parents about their prior experiences. According to the information I gained, most
of these children were cared by baby sitters who spoke to them and sang for them in English. But when I asked Biniyam’s mother whether Biniyam had an English speaking baby sitter or not, she answered “no”. But she added that Biniyam used to cling on friends and other children from early on. Whatever the reasons, from the narratives of the teachers, the parents and my own experience some ‘baitawar’ children become comfortable and adapt easily. I refer to this kind of children as “easily pliable children” or “easily adaptable children” or “easygoing children”. However, the question still remains: “how come that these three groups of children respond differently when they first come to the ECECS? As Biniyam’s father indicated one reason could be the child’s earlier experience. Furthermore, such differences may be attributed to children’s background in terms of ethnic, racial, class and gender differences (Bernhard, 1995). Another reason could be attributed to differences in the “learning style” of the individual child (Pike & Selby, 1988). Two major factors determine one’s learning style: “perceptual abilities”, the means one grasps information, and “ordering abilities”, the way one organizes information (Pike & Selby, 1988, p. 83). So the differences in the behaviors of the ‘baitawar’ children’s situations during their transition from home to ECES can be examined from this point of view. But the issue needs to be researched further.

In general, except for this last group of children, the “easily adaptable children”, the teachers in this study believed that, the transitional experiences of ‘baitawar’ children were very difficult and took a longer time as compared to the transitional experiences of ‘native children’. Just to supplement this from my own experience in Ethiopia, I worked in ECES for several years with children whose home language and culture were similar with the language and the culture of the early childhood education settings, that is with
'native' children. I observed that during the transitional periods, many children cried and were distressed for an average of two or three days because they did not want to separate from their care-givers or parents. Their separation anxiety was never to the extent of what I observed with 'baitawar' children in the ECES where I worked in Toronto. I remember many children who took over three weeks to adjust to the classroom settings; I remember many children who played and talked well in their first two or three days of their transition period and suddenly got distressed and isolated themselves when they found out that they did not understand what was being spoken in the ECES; I remember how they isolated themselves and sat in a corner and cried with sad and gloomy faces; I remember how many mothers cried when their children found it difficult to separate from them and to stay in the ECES. It was not unusual for me to sense anxiety, uncertainty, fatigue and frustration on the part of the parents when they saw the intensity of the anger, the crying, the clinging and the screaming of their children during the transitional period. Furthermore, I remember how many mothers and fathers said that they felt guilty thinking that they had not prepared their children to cope with ECES. From that experience, I can attest to how the three partners: the children, the teachers and the parents could experience difficulties such as frustrations, feelings of guilt and failure if they were not familiar to ways of dealing with 'baitawar' children's transitional experiences. As indicated earlier, the good thing is that 'baitawar' children's intense uneasiness and frustrations are temporary. Once they get used to the ECES, the joy and pleasure they get from playing, from getting involved in various activities and from interacting with the teachers and other children in the classrooms and outside the classrooms is immense. Some children even get so attached to the teachers and the
children that they refuse to go home at the end of the day. But this does not suggest that we ignore the intense uneasiness they experience during the transitional period. In fact, we should develop techniques that could help to ease this intense uneasiness during the transitional period. The question is: what techniques might assist in dealing with the transition of 'baitawar' children from home to ECECS? The answer to this question is discussed in the following section.

6.2.3. TECHNIQUES OF DEALING WITH TRANSITIONAL EXPERIENCES OF ‘BAITAWAR’ CHILDREN

As indicated earlier, the data gathered from the teachers and the parents in this study supplemented by what I observed while working with children of more or less similar background, lead me to conclude that the transitional experiences of ‘baitawar’ children, in this case, children of first generation Ethiopia immigrant parents was more intense and lasted longer than the transitional experiences of ‘native’ children. The next question was: what techniques or means did the teachers and the administration of the ECES use to reduce the intensity of the uneasiness of the transitional experiences to help ‘baitawar’ children adjust to the classroom situation with ease? The question is a general question that seeks techniques of dealing with ‘baitawar’ children. In analyzing the responses to this question, I first identified those techniques which the teachers claimed did not work for them to comfort and calm the children and, second, I identified those techniques which they claimed worked.

Three teachers, Susan, Barbara and Jeanette indicated that at the initial stage, particularly when the children were at the highest pitch of intensity in their protest to be part of the classroom environment, trying to comfort them through picking them up, hugging, touching, playing, talking in a language that they did not understand, soothing
them in a way that was not familiar to them, singing songs in melodies that they were not familiar with and giving them toys to play with, did not work. In fact, these teachers recalled that when they tried to talk to them, the children turned their faces away, when they tried to give them toys they refused to take them or if they took them they would throw them away and when they tried to hug them they struggled to get out of their arms. These teachers said that talking in a language that the children did not understand intensified the children's protest against staying in the ECECS and in turn made their transition from home to ECES worse. They emphasized that the 'normal' techniques used to comfort 'native' children only made the matter worse for 'baitawar' children.

Among the techniques that the teachers claimed worked for them included: encouraging parents to stay in the classroom for some time, using a lot of pictures and visualization, saying a few simple words in the mother tongue of the children and asking parents if there were any English words that were familiar to the children and using those words when necessary, where possible looking for teachers who spoke the language of the child. For example, Teacher Audrey said that the administration of the daycare where she is working, always looked for casual teachers who had the cultural and linguistic background of the 'baitawar' children. This suggests that the involvement of the administration in ameliorating the problems of 'baitawar' children's transition from home to ECES is very important.

Normally, when young children come to an ECES for the first time, it is important to ask the parents to stay in the classroom for two or three days until the child feels comfortable. But staying around for two or three days in ECES does not appear to be adequate when it comes to dealing with 'baitawar' children because such children take a
longer time, sometimes from three weeks to one month, to settle down which, in turn, demands the presence of the parents in the classroom for a longer period (Teacher Diane, Teacher Audrey). Teacher Jeanette commented:

Like many of the children whose home language was different from the language of the early childhood education settings, Bethelihem was crying non-stop. So I insisted that her mother stay in the classroom and she did. In the presence of her mother, Bethelihem was smiling at us and also was trying to explore things in the classroom. What I mean is that when she was within easy reach of her mother she felt secure. But when her mother tried to leave the room, she ran to her and started crying again. So her mother had to stay for about a week in the classroom. (Jeanette, July, 1999)

Teacher Jeanette’s account of Bethelihem’s experience during her transition period is consistent with the idea that “infant and young children tend to explore an unfamiliar environment in the presence of their mothers, primary care-givers, but slow down or cease exploration in their absence” (Ainsworth, Bleher, Waters & Wall, 1978, p. x). This means that the presence of primary care-givers in the classroom helps to ease the transition of children of first generation immigrant parents from home ECES. But as teacher Audrey pointed out, some parents resist staying in the classroom thinking that they are wasting their time. For example, when Father Tasew was asked to stay in the classroom until his son, Tefera adjusted in the classroom setting, he felt guilty because he missed time at work. Mother Mekidus also said that at first she did not think that her presence in the classroom would help until she saw her daughter’s improvement in her adjustment. Therefore, encouraging parents to stay and giving them orientation on how to be the “partners” (Wilson, 1997) of teachers in comforting and helping settle down their children in ECES is one means of promoting the smooth transition of ‘baitawar’ children from home to ECES. But it is not all the teachers in this study who agreed that parents’ presence in the classroom during the transitional period of their children from
home to ECES could help. In fact, Teacher Susan and Teacher Audrey believed that parents’ stay in the classroom during the transitional period would elongate the children’s adjustment as it would not allow the child to stand by herself/himself.

In general, I believe that both parents and teachers should be aware of the fact that a positive “partnership” between them is a key towards better understanding, learning and adaptation of their children (Bernhard, Lefebvre, Kilbride, & Chud, 1998; Brown, 1979; Kenneth & Rosemary, 1992; Mock, 1986; Pugh, 1985; Wilson, 1997). Positive and a warm attitude between the two partners can be an avenue toward comforting children during their transition from home to ECES. Particularly, for teachers and other early childhood education professionals, “a closer relationship with parents offer opportunities for overcoming some of the many discontinuities between home and pre-school services” (Pugh, 1985, p. 223) as they could exchange ideas helpful for the children’s well-being both at home and at ECES.

Since the children do not understand spoken words or sentences, it is helpful to communicate with them through pictures and gestures (Teacher Susan; Teacher Diane). This method is also a common method used to teach young children in any ECES. But as pointed out by Teacher Mary, it has particular importance to the children whose home language is different from the language of the ECES as it enables them to see the pictures of things that they do not know their names of in English; therefore, a second technique is to use pictures, particularly pictures that are ‘culture specific’, helps the child to understand what the teacher is talking about.

A third technique which was frequently mentioned by the teachers was asking the parents to tell them the English words or songs that the children already knew. This helps
the teachers to say a few words or to sing songs that the children are familiar with because, as Montessori (1973) points out, if one wants to communicate or to teach a child in an understandable way, it is important to start from what the child already knows. Although most of the Ethiopian first generation immigrant parents did not speak in English with their children prior to their attendance in ECES, there probably are a few English words that the children would have picked from children’s television programs, from other children in the neighborhood play grounds or from family friends. For example, Mother Lemlem stated:

Derege picked up the Barney song from children’s tv programs and was able to sing that song since he was about sixteen months old. So when he was crying during his first few weeks in the day care, I told his teacher to sing him the Barney song and she did. He stopped crying and listened to the song for few minutes. I think that kind of thing can help children to calm down a little bit. (Lemlem, June, 1999)

From Mother Lemlem’s account, singing songs that the ‘baitawar’ children already knew helps to stop them from crying. So as part of preparation for ECES, it is helpful if the parents buy tapes or CD’s and familiarize their children with Canadian children songs and music. Providing the teachers with tapes or CDs with songs in the mother tongue will also help.

A fourth technique is preparing a list of simple words from the language of the ‘baitawar’ children and using them during the transition period. Like many other ECES in Toronto, the ECES in this study had a list of simple words from other languages including Ethiopian languages such as Amharic, Tigrigna and Oromigna. But as some of the teachers pointed out, sometimes it is difficult to pronounce these words in the way the ‘baitawar’ children understand them. In spite of this, all the teachers agreed that saying a
few simple words to the children in their home language was another technique that
helped them to communicate with the children. From my experience, when ‘baitawar’
children hear words from their home language that are mispronounced, they become
surprised. Sometimes, they even laugh. But once they are used to them they are tolerant.
So it worth using simple words from their home language even if the teachers do not
pronounce them correctly.

During our discussion on the issue of transitional experiences, some of the teachers in
this study were interested to know more techniques on how to deal with ‘baitawar’
children. In fact, two of them insisted that they would like to know more about the issue
of dealing with ‘baitawar’ children and asked me if I could tell them any techniques that I
believed worked in comforting ‘baitawar’ children in ECES. I was happy to share with
them the techniques that I found effective in my experiences of working with children of
similar backgrounds.

During the first few months in that ECES just as the teachers in this study did, I
thought that hugging, soothing in my own way, talking to them and giving them toys to
play with would help to comfort the children; however, just as these techniques did not
work for the teachers in this study, they did not also work for me. But in my endeavor to
comfort the ‘baitawar’ children, I discovered that what worked for me best was using toys
and educational materials in slow motion in areas where the crying and distressed
children could watch. These activities included such things as rolling small balls on the
floor; building blocks very gently and in an orderly fashion; hugging dolls with love and
care; doing puzzles; pouring water from one jug to another with care and precision;
drawing pictures on large pieces of paper on the floor; dancing in slow motion. What I
observed was that when the crying and distressed children saw these activities they would pause to watch, they stopped crying and sometimes smile and burst into laughter. This is consistent with Montessori’s (1973) theory which says that children love to see small and moving things and also enjoy activities that are performed in a gentle and slow manner. I told Teacher Diane about these techniques. She assured me that she also observed that such techniques were more effective than the traditional techniques of hugging, talking or singing songs that they do not know to children who are upset. For this reason, I believe that these slow and gentle nonverbal activities are as effective technique in dealing with ‘baitawar’ children’s uneasiness during their transition from home to ECES.

In short, the techniques that teachers and parents can use to assist ‘baitawar’ children in making the transition from home to ECES include: encouraging parents to stay in the ECECS until children feel comfortable, using a lot of visualization, saying a few English words that the children already know, singing songs that they know, saying a few words from the home language of the children and engaging in nonverbal activities in a gentle and slow manner. Moreover, as indicated earlier, pre-transitional techniques such as familiarizing the children with a few basic English words and songs, participating in parenting centers and arranging visits to ECES where the ‘baitawar’ child will join can contribute to ease the transitional experiences from home to ECES. What is also important to note is that the traditional techniques of easing the transition of ‘native’ children from home to ECES are not effective with ‘baitawar’ children and may, in fact, make the situation worse. Furthermore, as indicated elsewhere, it is also important to note that all ‘baitawar’ are not homogenous. They can be “heterogenous” (Bernhard, 1995) since factors like class, gender and race may influence their experiences during
their transition or adjustment. Due to this, a technique that works for one child may not work for another child. So it is always important to consult parents to know the background and the home experiences of the child in detail.

6.3. THE PHASE OF ADJUSTMENT

In Section 6.2, I looked at the transitional experiences of the ‘baitawar’ children and related aspects. In this section, I considered their adjustments to the sleep patterns, the eating habits and the language of the ECES.

Based on the data I obtained from the teachers and the parents and also from my own experiences, it takes an average of three weeks for ‘baitawar’ children to settle into the ECES. After they stop crying and become calm, they start “mixing” with other children in the classroom (Teacher Mary). Slowly by slowly they “approach” the teacher (Teacher Diane). They talk to their teacher in their own language; they touch them; they hug them; they kiss them; they smile at them; they explore their faces; they sit on their laps. Although they do these things, ‘baitawar’ still experience some difficulties in adjusting to certain things such as taking naps, eating meals and the language of the ECES.

6.3.1. NAP TIME EXPERIENCES

Four of the six teachers pointed out that they found it more difficult to send ‘baitawar’ children to sleep during nap time as compared to ‘native’ children. One of the reasons for this was that parents in different cultures have their own ways of soothing children (Teacher Audrey; Teacher Susan). In other words, since these children are used to certain kinds of “sleep inducement techniques” (Ronson, 1994, p. 38) when they go to sleep in their homes, the teachers’ ways of soothing them in the ECECS do not help them sleep.
Mother Asegedech’s narratives substantiates the observations of Teacher Audrey and Teacher Susan:

From a very young age I used to sing an Ethiopian song that helped Selamawit (her daughter) to go to sleep. I mean, I used to say ishu, ru, ru, ru, ishu, ru, ru, ru, ru, (an Ethiopian song used to soothe children to send them sleep) and to pat her back. When she started daycare, her teacher told me that she found it difficult to send Selamawit to sleep. I told her the kind of soothing song I usually used at home. She was able to say it and she told me that it helped a lot to get Selamwit to sleep during nap time. (Mother Asegedech, June, 1999)

Other parents used different techniques. For example, Mother Kidist said that she used to send her son, Tefera, to sleep by carrying him on her back by using a ‘netela’, a sheet of cloth with colorful trim, and singing ‘yemamsh enat toloneilet’, an Ethiopian lullaby song used to soothe children and send them to sleep. She said that her son had difficulty sleeping during nap time in the ECES for quite a while. Other mothers and fathers also told similar stories of the experiences of their children’s sleep patterns in their homes and the difficulties they faced during nap time in the ECECS.

The parents’ accounts support what Cummins (1989) observed about sending children to sleep. According to him, as the pattern of sending children to sleep differs from culture to culture, children might find it difficult to go for a nap if they are from a home that is culturally and linguistically different. Children in classroom situations are usually expected to act and talk according to the institutionalized/structured rules, regulations and ways of doing things. If they are not familiar with these routines, children will have difficulty adjusting. So Cummins (1989) strongly argues that it is important for early childhood education teachers to understand the cultural experiences of children with regard to their sleep patterns and other related aspects. As stated in Chapter Five, before the children in this study started attending ECES, the languages, the songs and the
lullabies were from Ethiopian culture. Gracia and McLaughlin (1995) write that there is a need for early childhood educators to understand the impact of this home culture on the daily routines of ECES such as nap time, so that ‘baitawar’ children are able to make transition. This idea is consistent with Mother Asegedech’s explanation with regard to her daughter, Selamawit’s nap time experience. The techniques that Mother Asegedech told to her daughter’s teacher helped in sending her to sleep during naptime in the ECES. Therefore, it is important that early childhood education teachers ask ‘baitawar’ children’s parents about the techniques they use at home to send their children to sleep.

6.3.2. MEAL TIME EXPERIENCES

Another area where ‘baitawar’ children face difficulties during their adjustment in ECES is in what and how they eat. This is reflected in the experiences of some of the children in this study. Many Ethiopians do not use forks, spoons and knives when they eat their food. Instead they tear off pieces of ‘injera’ (Ethiopian flat and spongy bread) by which they gather spicy sauces and put it in their mouths. Many children are skilled at this method of eating at an early age. So for such children, adapting to a new way of eating takes some time. Mother Asegedech recalled how her daughter, Selamawit refused to use fork and spoon during her transition in the daycare:

Before my daughter, Selamawit went to daycare, she liked ‘injera’ and ‘wot’ (‘wot’ is an Ethiopian spicy sauce). She knew how to eat them by using her fingers. When she was new in the daycare, she refused to use fork and spoon. Not knowing that Ethiopians do not use fork and spoon when they eat, the teacher asked me if it was fine for Selamawit to eat without fork and spoon. I explained to her that not using fork and spoon was not only Selamawit’s way of eating but it was an Ethiopian way of eating. I mean I told her it was the culture of Ethiopians to eat by hand. (Mother Asegedech, July 1999)

While Mother Asegedech’s narrative was an example of how ‘baitawar’ children
preferred the way of eating that they were accustomed at home, Father Tasew’s observation inform us how they like to eat the kind of food that they were used to eating at home:

My son, Tefera, was used to eating ‘injera and wot’ since he was eight months old. When he joined daycare at two years and one month, he refused to eat plain food, I mean food without pepper and spice. We had to take the kind of food he liked to the day care for quite a while. Yes, it really took him quite a while to get used to plain food. (Tasew July, 1999)

Both of the above excerpts suggest that teachers or administrators of ECES need to gather information from the parents not only about what the children eat at home but also how they eat. Being born in Canada, children of first generation Ethiopian immigrant parents may be familiar with some of the food that are not prepared in the Ethiopian way. But they may prefer to eat the kind of food that is frequently eaten at home until they get used to it. Actually, it does not take a long time for the children to get used to the food. When they start adjusting to the situation and see other children eat, they also start eating the food that the other children eat. But until they get used to eat the food in the ECES, it is important to encourage first generation immigrant parents to pack the kind of food that their children like. Parents should also be aware that it is their responsibility to inform the ECES about the likes and dislikes of their children.

6.3.3. LANGUAGE EXPERIENCES

The obvious experience that ‘baitawar’ children have during their transition from home to ECES is language. Even after the children stop crying and become more settled, they continue to speak in their home language for some time. Such children are not aware that the teachers and other children do not understand what they are saying. So when they ask for something or when they want to tell something to the teachers, they
use language which the teachers do not understand. Mother Lemlem observed:

After Derege was quite settled in the daycare, one day he was crying and saying something to the teacher at the same time. But his teacher couldn’t figure out what he was saying and was worried for not being able to help him. So she called me in my office and told me that he was crying non-stop and she couldn’t understand what he was saying. I asked her to let him speak to me on the telephone. When I asked him what had happened to him, he said, ‘taten amemegn’ (meaning my toes hurt). I asked the teacher to take off his shoes and look at his toes. She found out that his toes were swollen because something fell on them. You see, he kept on speaking in Amharic which the teacher couldn’t understand and cried for a long time. But thank God, thereafter it did not take him a long time to understand and speak English. (Lemlem, July, 1999)

Mother Asegdech’s story about her daughters’ language experiences is similar:

One day Selamawit was asking her teacher in Amharic to give her water to drink. She asked her repeatedly. But her teacher was not sure of what Selamawit was saying. By accident I dropped in her classroom because I had few minutes break from my work. I found her crying and saying, “temagn, temagn” (meaning I am thirsty). Her teacher told me that it was quite a while since she started crying and saying something which she could not understand. I felt so guilty for not teaching my daughter how to say “I am thirsty” and other basic words that my daughter would have used. Anyway, children are children. I mean they are good in language learning. She soon was able to speak English. (Mother Asegdech, June, 1999)

The above excerpts show the difficulties that two of the children in this study faced at the initial stage because they were unable to express their needs in the language of the ECES, that is English. These excerpts also show that it did not take long before the children understood and spoke the language of the ECES.

The teachers had similar perspectives to the parents. Teacher Mary said that, although both the children and the teachers faced problems of communication during the transitional and the adjustment periods, the children did not take a long time to understand and speak English. The question is “why do such children learn the language of the ECES so quickly?”. This was one of the questions that many of the parents in the Toronto daycare where I worked asked when they saw that their children
understood and spoke English within a short period of time.

It is true that children with a linguistic background different from the language of the ECES, are quick to pick up the language of the ECES. There could be many reasons for this. One of them has to do with the teacher's continuous efforts in encouraging and stimulating the children to speak the ECES language, in this case English. Another may have to do with the nature of the children's mind. As Montessori (1973) stresses children at an early age are endowed with a "special mind" that "absorbs" the language and culture from their surroundings easily as compared to adults. Montessori attributes this ability to their nature of having what she refers as a "sponge mind" or an "absorbent mind", that is as sponge absorbs water from a container, children's minds also absorb language and culture from the surrounding. Another reason usually given by the proponents of bilingual/multilingual education is that children who already speak their home language have the base, the confidence and the skill that facilitates learning a second language (Cummins, 1979, 1985, 1986, 1996; Dotsch, 1992; Feuerverger, 1994; Garcia, 1997; Jong, 1977; King & Chipman, 1994; Mock, 1986; Siren, 1991). Siren (1991, p. 18, 34) writes that the ability to speak a home language stimulates "the child's bilingual and bicultural development... It is an intellectual advantage and...makes it easier to learn other languages". From this point of view one of the reasons for these children's ability to easily learn the language of the ECES, English, is because they were already familiar with their home language. But there could also be other reasons. So further research may be needed.

In this particular section of the thesis, I look at the process of how the children learn their second language, English. One important thing to note here is that when I talk of
second language learning, I am not in any way forgetting the issue of “promoting first language/home language learning” (Dotsch, 1992). As already stated, bilingualism/multilingualism is a base for second language learning. The issue of the promotion of home language is discussed in Chapter Seven.

From the teachers’ and the parents’ narratives, and from what I know through experiences, although ‘baitawar’ children initially speak in their home languages, as soon as they realize that the other children and the teachers speak a different language they become curious and want to speak the language of the ECES. In so doing, they pause every now and then and listen carefully. But before they say something in the language of the ECES, English, they use words which are neither English nor their home language. Their language is not babbling as children do before they start talking in their mother tongue, but is just strange words created by them as an entry into the world of the language of the ECES. Most likely they believe that the words they create are in the language of the other children and the teachers or by using these words they might think that they are speaking the language that the other children and the teachers speak.

Teacher Jeanette said: “I remember how Bethelihem was saying many strange words before she started speaking English. Well, I don’t get surprised about that because that is how children whose first languages is not English usually do”. Teacher Diane also expressed a similar observation: “Oh! Yes, Tirsit was saying some odd words before she started speaking English. I asked her dad what some of those words meant. He told me that he did not know because they were not from his language”. It is interesting to note that these children used these strange words in their home environment as well:

Before Tirsit spoke English in the daycare, she used to say words which I did not understand. I think they were just nonsense words like she was saying ‘bichu"
The teachers and the parents agreed that before the children spoke English words, they spoke strange words or phrases. The question, then, was: what comes next? In response to this, Teacher Diane stated that after the children spoke strange words for some time, they start uttering one or two English words which they used for almost everything they wanted to say. She also pointed out that having used one or two words for awhile, they start assigning the right words to the right thing. To put it in Diane's own words:

What I mean is that if a child picks the word "me" s/he could use the word "me" to mean many things like asking for water, pointing at a girl or a boy whom s/he wants to play with, telling what s/he did or what s/he wants to do in a block corner, asking a teacher to read a book for her/him, etc. Then after few days or a few weeks, they start saying the right word that represents the right thing. That is how they come to speak English... Well, like other children who usually use one or two words almost for everything they want to say, if I remember correctly, Tirist also used one or few words when she wanted to say something. (Teacher Diane August, 1999)

Other teachers made similar observations. Having examined the data from the teachers and the parents with regard to second language development in ECES, I realize that my observation in the ECES where I was working with children who had similar backgrounds with the children in this study coincided with the observation of the teachers and the parents in this study. Certainly, like the teachers and the parents in this study, I observed children speaking in their own language at the initial stage; following that I observed them using strange words; then I observed them using a word or a phrase for everything they wanted to say or to ask; finally they assigned the right word to a right
thing. In fact, some of the strange words that some children used to say still resonate in my memory. For example, a child used to say “tuk, tuk, tuk”; I also remember a phrase that a child used for everything that he wanted to say: “let us go”. For example, if he wanted to say “I want to draw” he would say “let us go”; if he wanted to say “sit down” to someone he would say “let us go”; if he wanted to say, “let me play with sand”, he would say “let us go”. Although it is difficult to know what children think, in this case, it seems as though they think that they are speaking the language that the teachers and the children in the classroom are speaking. Furthermore, as McGroarty (1988) writes, children do not have social inhibitions and a fear of criticism when they say what comes to their mind because they see language as a form of play. This also could be one of the reasons that enables them to learn a language very quickly as opposed to adults.

After exploring the language experiences of the children based on the data from the teachers and parents supplemented by my own experience, I concluded that when children learn a second language in ECES, they pass through phases. The first phase is when the children keep on speaking in their home language as though others understood their language. The second phase is the period during which the children create their own words and phrases which do not belong to either their home language or to the language of the ECES. I refer to this phase as the “phase of uttering strange words”. During this time, it seems as though the children are solving their problem of communication by creating their own words. The third phase is the period during which they learn a few English words and use these few words for almost everything they want to say. I refer to this phase as the “phase of using one word/phrase for everything”. For example, if a child learns the word “this”, s/he would use it for almost everything s/he wants to say or
to do. The fourth phase is the time during which children are able to assign the right word to the right things. That is, during this phase although the children know only few words or few phrases, they are able to attach the right word or the right phrase to the idea or thing. The fifth phase is the period during which the children are able to communicate in simple words and sentences that are understandable to the teachers and other children in the classroom. The time taken to reach this fifth stage, may depend on factors such as the age of the child, the home experiences, the teachers’ skills of language stimulation, the educational materials in the classroom and the suitability of the classroom for interaction between children. Based on the data I gathered from the teachers in this study and from my own observation, it usually takes four to five months for a child who comes to the ECES with home language to understand and speak the language of the ECES, in this case, English. But in general, it is very fascinating and educative to observe second language acquisition process in ECES.

6.4. SUMMARY

The observations of the parents and the teachers demonstrate that, like other children with similar backgrounds, children of first generation Ethiopian immigrant parents experienced more intense uneasiness or more difficulties during their transition from home to ECES that lasted longer than the transition of children whose home language and culture were similar with the culture of the ECES. Like other children, these children experienced separation anxiety during their transition from home to ECES. According to the narratives of the teachers and the parents what made the transitional experiences of ‘baitawar’ children more difficult was their unfamiliarity with the language and the
culture of the ECES. Although these are the major reasons that stood out in the narratives of the teachers and the parents, it does not mean that these are the only reasons that made difference in the experiences of ‘baitawar’ and ‘native’. There may also be ethnic, cultural, class, racial or gender differences that influence their experiences during their transition from home to ECES or during their adjustment in the ECES.

The parents and the teachers also observed that during the transition from home to ECES, all the three partners: the children, the parents and the teachers were frustrated; The parents felt guilty thinking that they did not prepare their children for daycare; teachers experienced a sense of failure and frustration when they felt that they were unable to help the children; the children were frustrated in not understanding the language and the culture of the ECES. The question then was, what techniques could help to ease the transition of ‘baitawar’ children from home to ECES? Among the techniques identified encouraging parents to stay in the classroom until the ‘baitawar’ child gets settled is included. Other techniques included: using visualization, that is pictures and gestures, using the few English words that the child already knew, singing songs the child knows, saying a few words from the home language of the child and above all engaging in activities with other children or with educational/play materials in a gentle and slow manner, and making sure that the ‘baitawar’ child sees those activities.

While the ‘baitawar’ children acquire second language, they pass through phases: speaking in their own language; creating strange words, using few words for everything they want to say; assigning the write words to the right things or ideas; and communicating with the teachers and other children.

Although they experience a lot of uneasiness during their transition from home to
ECES, sooner or later, these ‘baitawar’ children adjust to the language and the daily routines of the ECECS. In other words, whatever experiences they have during the transition, after a short period of time, they adjust to the ECECS and participate fully in its many activities and they are no more referred to as ‘baitawar’ children. Chapter Seven shows this fact.
CHAPTER SEVEN
7. POST ADJUSTMENT EXPERIENCES

7.1. INTRODUCTION

As indicated in Chapter One, Section 1.6, the phrase "post adjustment experience" refers to the experiences of the children after they get used to the ECES in general and the ECECS in particular. This chapter explores the post adjustment experiences of the children. As indicated earlier, the data for Chapter Five was based on the recollections of the parents on their children's pre-early childhood experiences and the data for Chapter Six was based the recollections of both the parents and the teachers on the past transitional and adjustment experiences of the children. The data in the present chapter, however, is not only based on the accounts of the parents and the teachers, but also on my actual observations in the homes and ECECS. Furthermore, while the data for Chapters Five and Six is based only on the past experiences of the children, a major portion of the data for this chapter is based on their experiences during the time I collected the data.

The chapter has three major sections: a) post adjustment experiences of the children at home, that is the experiences of the children at home after they adjusted in the ECES; b) post adjustment experiences of the children at ECECS, that is the experiences of the children in the classroom settings after they had adjusted to them; and c) the interconnectedness of the children's experiences at home and at ECECS and its implication for the classroom curriculum and teaching/learning process.

In my investigation of the post adjustment experiences of the children in their home environments, I raised two major questions: a) the question of how the parents perceived their children's home experiences after their adjustment in the ECECS, that is, the
children's home experiences as the result of their experiences in the ECECS; and b) the question of parents' efforts in revitalizing the culture from their country of origin, Ethiopia. While analyzing the parents' perspectives on these issues, I came across two major themes: the children as agents of change in their home settings and the children's exposure to Ethiopian cultural heritages. So the analysis in the first section of this chapter revolves around these two major themes.

The second section of this chapter investigates the post adjustment experiences of the children at the ECECS. While I analyzed the teachers' and the parents' perspectives on the post adjustment experiences of the children in the classroom settings and my own observation notes, among other things, I came up with three major themes: the issue of the physical organization of the classrooms; the children's activities; and the post adjustment characteristics of the children and their favorite activities as perceived by their teachers.

The third section looked at the interconnectedness of the children's experiences at home and at ECECS and its implications for the curriculum and teaching/learning process. The concept of the interconnectedness of the children's experiences at home and at ECECS was one of the major themes that emerged from the narratives of the teachers, the parents and my own actual observations at home and at ECECS. While investigating the implication of this theme for the curriculum and the teaching/learning process in the classroom settings, I focused on the issue of inclusive curriculum.
7. 2. POST ADJUSTMENT EXPERIENCES AT HOME

7. 2.1. BACK TO HOME AS AGENTS OF CHANGE

Children become agents of change in their homes as the result of their experiences in daycare. (Father Mesfin, June, 1999)

In Chapter Six, the transitional experiences of the children from home to ECECS were explored. The intensity of their uneasiness and the difficulties in adjusting to the language and the daily routines of the ECES such as taking naps and eating experiences were highlighted. Moreover, the phases that the children passed through while adjusting to the language of the ECES were identified. After passing through such experiences, the children become immersed and adjusted to the language and the culture of the ECES. They return to their homes with their new experiences gained from the ECES. The question is: how did their experiences in the ECES influence their experiences at home?

In general, the parents expressed their satisfaction and wonder at their children’s ability in learning the English language within a short period of time in the ECES. On the other hand, most of them pointed out that, after the children got used to speaking in English for a time, the style of communication in the home environment changed. The children preferred to speak English whereas the parents preferred to speak their home languages. In other words, after the children adjusted in the language of the ECES, the issue of speaking two languages came into the picture of the home settings. As Father Arega said, changes in the style of communication was one of the things that his son Binyam brought to their home as the result of his language experiences in ECES. Since the children wanted to speak in English at home and even refused to speak in their home language, dealing with language issues was not easy. Some referred to this issue as a
"struggle" (Father Tasew, Mother Lemlem, Mother Asegedech) and others referred to it as a "challenge" (Father Belete, Father Arega, Mother Mulu). As Wong-Fillmore (1991) writes, when children get used to speaking the ECES language and speak less and less of their home languages, there can be communication breakdown between children and parents resulting in a struggle between the two. In fact, as Siren (1991, p. 38) writes, when their children refuse to speak the home language, parents get tempted to "abandon" the use of the home language. To some extent, this notion is reflected in the narratives of the parents when explaining changes in the pattern of communication in their homes after their children became adjusted to the language of the ECES.

Many of the parents in this study speak English quite well. But since they were interested in retaining their language and culture, they wanted their children to speak their home language. However, many of the parents feared that their children's exposure to two languages at the same time could bring confusion and frustration in their minds and they did not want to press them to speak in their mother tongue constantly. In five of the six homes that I observed, sometimes, parents spoke in the home language and children responded in English; other times, both the children and the parents spoke in what Lanza (1997) refers to as "mixed language", consisting of their mother tongue and English. Still other times, I observed the parents speaking to their children in their mother tongue for a minute or so and speaking in English for another minute or so. Out of the fear of the parents that their children would be confused if they insisted that they speak exclusively in their mother tongue, in five of the six homes I observed, there was a lack of consistency in the pattern of communication between the parents and the children.

The parents' interest in maintaining their language heritage, however, was immense.
As they mentioned over and over again, their problem was knowing how to maintain it.

For example, many parents asked me if I knew of any books that could inform parents how to maintain home language when young children of early childhood age children get immersed in the language of ECES and start speaking less and less in their home languages. Father Belete was one of those parents who raised such question:

You see, as a first generation immigrant parent, I think I know my language and culture very well. Unless I pass it on to my children, I think nobody else would do it. So it is important for me to know how to do it. Yes, I really need someone to give me some tips as to how to maintain our language. I wonder if you could suggest any book that can inform us about how to enable our daughter, Trisit, to speak Amharic well. (Father Belete, July, 1999)

Among the six children I observed, only one child was able to speak her mother tongue, Amharic, comparatively well. The probing question to this child’s parents, Father Zewdie and Mother Mekidus, was: how is it that she was able to speak Amharic well? In response to this question, they proudly said that their daughter, Bethelihem, was able to speak Amharic because they spoke to her in Amharic with consistency.

Furthermore, they pointed out that the two of them always spoke in Amharic to each other so that she would only hear Amharic at home. Father Zewdie explained this:

You know, many of my friends fear that their children would be confused and frustrated if they insist them to speak Amharic while they prefer them to speak in English. I do not really buy that idea because not only I have read books which explained that children could learn two or more languages at the same time, but also I have seen it from the experiences of my own daughter. You know, children are good in learning language. They are not like adults. I don’t have any a fear that my daughter would get confused and frustrated if I spoke to her only in Amharic in our home. Myself and my wife speak to her in Amharic constantly. I think consistency is very important. We also try to find time to speak to her and to read to her in Amharic. The other thing is that when my wife and me speak to each other, we always speak in Amharic. I mean we don’t mix Amharic and English. That is why our daughter is able to speak both English and Amharic well. (Father Zewdie, Sept, 1999)

As we can see from the above excerpt, Bethelihem’s parents did not have a fear of
confusion and frustration due to their daughter’s exposure to two languages at the same time. They spoke to her in the home language constantly and made all possible efforts to find time and energy to expose her to the Amharic language. Furthermore, the parents used to show her various videos in Amharic. They tell her and read her Amharic stories and encouraged her to play with children who could speak Amharic. As they stressed their commitment in consistency and hard work has helped their daughter to speak Amharic well. Lanza (1997) also writes that children’s ability to speak a home language depends on parents’ consistency in speaking the home language and the amount of time that the children are exposed to the home language. Bethelhem’s parents repeatedly pointed out they did not perceive any problem associated with encouraging children to speak their home language in the home environment. Instead, they believed that speaking two or more languages could help children to learn more cultures and other things than children who speak only one language. In fact, a number of articles suggest that not only young children can learn two or more languages at the same time but also speaking, reading and writing in more than one languages contributes to the healthy development of children. They stress that maintaining home language has been found to be important to the psychological, social, linguistic and cognitive well-being of children (Cummins, 1979; 1985, 1986, 1987, 1996; Dotsch, 1992; Feuerverger, 1994; Feuerverger & Scane, 1995; Garcia, 1997; Jong, 1977; King & Chipman, 1994; Mock, 1986; Siren, 1991). Cummins (1987, p. 64) writes that “cognitive-academic skills transfer across languages given sufficient exposure and motivation to acquire”. Feuerverger (1994, p. 126) also writes that “bilingual children who have high levels of reading ability in their home language tend to develop high levels of ability in English literacy”.
In general, from the accounts of the parents and from my own observations in the home environment, the interest of all parents in maintaining their home language was immense; however, as indicated earlier, except one pair of parents who constantly spoke in Amharic in the home environment, many of the other parents had a fear that their children would be confused and frustrated if they were exposed to both Amharic and English at the same time. In other words, they did not exercise consistency in speaking the home language. As a result, five of the six children in this study did not speak Amharic. But one thing is true for all of these five children: when their parents or other people speak to them in Amharic they understand and give responses in English. I think what was needed by the parents of these children was awareness with regard to the advantage of being bilingual or multilingual for children and the ways of promoting the home language. The point I am making here is that if these parents were made aware of the advantages of being bilingual or multilingual, they could have avoided the fear of confusion and frustration in their children and would have probably spoken to them in Amharic with consistency. This, in turn, would have helped the children to speak Amharic well. Also we have to realize that it is not only parents’ consistency that helps children to speak in their home language. The “amount of exposure to a language” (Mclaughlin, 1978) is a factor in determining speech in the home language or other languages. As most of the parents in this study pointed out, the amount of time they spent with their children was much less than the amount of time that their children spent in ECES. Furthermore, being first generation immigrants and given the strict immigration laws for entering Canada, almost all the parents in this study do not have an extended family. As most of them contended, the absence of an extended family which
could help in taking care of their children is another factor that contributed to their children's lack of exposure to their mother tongue.

All the teachers believed that it was important for the children to speak their home language. But some of them did not believe that it was part of their responsibility to deal with home languages. However, the responsibility that teachers take in this respect is not much. It is simply a matter of encouraging the child to speak the home language at home and at ECES whenever possible. This is reflected in mother Lemlem's comment:

You know, along with English language, I really want my son to speak Amharic because it is part of our identity. But he does not want me to speak in Amharic in the daycare. He often says to me: “Mom, please don’t speak Amharic in the daycare”. When I ask him why?, he says, “cos nobody speak Amharic in the daycare”. I think it would be good if the teachers tell children that “it is good to speak in home languages with mom and dad. (Mother Lemlem, July, 1999)

The above excerpt informs us that teachers' encouragement of children to speak in their home language can be a factor that could help to retain home language. Their attitudes toward the home language and encouragement of the children to speak their home language can help to develop pride in the children. In other words, for young children, teachers' encouragement is a driving force to speak their home language (Cummins, 1996, McGroarty, 1988).

Almost all the parents in this study believed that children would be interested in speaking in their home language and in asking questions related to home culture when they get older. Actually most of them indicated that around the age of six, children would be interested in speaking in their home language and in asking questions about Ethiopian culture related questions. Mother Lemlem had a story:

My older son who is eight years old now has a lot of interest to speak Amharic. Some times, he even regrets for not being able to speak Amharic well. He got interested to speak Amharic while he was about six years old. I remember what he said to me once. When he was six years old, I went with him to a school trip.
While we were in the bus, he said to me “mom I have some secret to tell you. But I can’t tell you because the other kids would hear me. I wish I knew Amharic so that the kids would not understand what I would say. You know, now he even pushes me to speak in Amharic. Not only this, but also he even asks me questions related to Ethiopian culture. For example, he asks questions such as “mom how do children play in Ethiopia?”, do children in Ethiopia take off their shoes when they enter church?” My friend’s older son is also interested to speak Amharic and ask questions like this one. Yes, I think children want to speak their mother tongue and to know about their country of origin when they get older. (Mother Lemlem, June, 1999)

In my informal interviews with the children in this study, one of the questions I raised was: Do you like to speak in Amharic? Whether the children answered “yes” or “no”, I asked them the reason for their responses. The answer of the two four-year-old children was “no”. When I asked them “why”, one of them answered: “because I don’t want to speak Amharic”. The other answered: “because my friends and my teachers in the daycare don’t speak Amharic”. On the other hand, the two six-year-old children stated that they wanted to speak Amharic so that they could speak with their grandmother and grandfather in Amharic when they would go to Ethiopia. They also said that they wanted to speak Amharic so that they could speak with Ethiopian visitors. The responses of the children to this question support the idea of the parents that the older children were more interested in speaking their home language, Amharic. Whatever the circumstances, the children brought change in communication patterns as the result of their experiences in the ECES.

The other areas of change in the home environment that were brought about by the children as the result of their experiences in the ECES were in the kind of food they ate at home. Almost all parents in this study said that before their children started attending ECES, they ate spicy Ethiopian food, ‘injera’ and ‘wot’, Ethiopian flat and spongy bread with spicy sauce. After children started attending ECES and got used to eating the foods in ECES, they resisted spicy Ethiopian food at home. Father Mesfin explained this:
Before Selamawit went to daycare, she used to eat Ethiopian spicy food. After she got used to plain food in the daycare, her interest in eating spicy food dwindled. So in some way or another, we had to change the way we cook food for her. I mean we had to make the food less spicy. That influenced what we also ate. I mean it is not only them who got changed but they also changed us. Well, I would say that children become agents of change in their homes as the result of their experiences in daycare. (Father Mesfin, June, 1999)

As mother Lemlem also stressed, once her children got used to the food in the ECES, they started whining by saying, “mom this is too spicy. I don’t want to eat spicy food”.

The children in this study asked their parents to tell them stories and to sing them songs that they heard in the ECES. At the initial stage, the parents did not know the stories and songs that the children heard in the ECES. The children got frustrated for their parents could not sing the kind of songs that they wanted them to sing. Father Mesfin explained:

Selamawit used to ask me to sing for her nursery rhymes that she heard in her daycare such as ‘Pat-A-Cake, Pat-A-Cake’. I could not sing for her because I did not know the song. You know, I did not grow up here. She also used to ask her mother. Her mother did not know either. So because of our inability to sing the songs that she wanted us to sing, sometimes she used to get frustrated and become sad. But as time went on, she taught us many nursery rhymes. Now I know how to sing many nursery rhymes, you know. What I mean is that she brought change in us as well or made us to know things that we did not know before. (Father Mesfin, June, 1999)

The parents' narratives on the issue of change that children bring into their homes and, in turn, to their parents goes with the theory which stresses that it is not only parents who bring change to their children or who influence their children, but it is also children who bring changes to their parents or who influence them (Ambert, 1992).
7.2.2. REVITALIZING ETHIOPIAN CULTURAL HERITAGES

All parents in this study have immense interest in familiarizing their children with the language and the cultural heritage from their country of origin, Ethiopia, along with the languages and the cultures of Canada. Father Arega explained this:

You know, as an immigrant person who immigrated recently, my mind moves in and out of two worlds, the world of my country of origin, Ethiopia and the world of my new country, Canada. What I think, what I say and what I plan for my children is directly or indirectly influenced by my experiences in these two worlds. You see, I want my children to gain the best from both worlds. I want them to be both Canadian and Ethiopian. I mean I want them to have dual identity, Canadian and Ethiopian. Since my children are born and being brought up here in Canada, I don’t think they would have problem of being part of Canadian cultures and languages. Although I need to exert a lot of effort to direct my children on how to become good Canadians, I believe I need to exert far greater effort to enable them know the history, cultures and languages of Ethiopia. (Father Arega, August, 1999)

Many of the parents stressed that they wanted their children to have “dual identity”, Canadian and Ethiopian. Most of them also pointed out that because their children were growing up here in Canada, they did not think that they would have a problem of being part of Canadian cultures and languages. Their worries, however, centered around the issue of inculcating elements of Ethiopian heritages: culture, languages and history. Many of them believed that they were doing their best to revitalize their culture, language and history through various means. But they were not satisfied with what they were doing. They thought that they needed support in terms of know how and materials to promote their culture and home languages. The issue was to look at what they were trying to do to promote “Ethiopianess” in their children’s lives. What are some of the means that they were trying to use to help their children become of aware Ethiopian culture and history? In response to this question, many of them pointed out that they try
to retain the culture and history of Ethiopia through artifacts and other educational means in the home environments. From my own observation in the home environment, I witnessed some of what the parents were saying. In four of the six homes I observed, there were various models, charts and pictures which reflected some elements of the culture, the history and the geography of Ethiopia. The models included: the indigenous Ethiopian Orthodox Church, the obelisk in the ancient city of Axum which is more than one thousand years old, the castle of Gonder which was built in sixteen century A.D., the nine hundred year old twelve rock hewn Churches in Lalibela which were carved from a single rock and were designated by UNESCO as the 8th wonder of the world and the various kinds of Ethiopian crosses. The charts included Ethiopian alphabet which I believe contain the only African alphabet and the Ethiopian calender which is seven or eight years behind the European calender. The pictures included: the Ethiopian coffee ceremony, the Blue Nile falls which is the source of the Nile river; different cultural groups in Ethiopia with various attires and some kings and queens of Ethiopia. While observing these things in the home environment, I asked the parents how they used these models, charts and pictures to teach their children. I learned that whenever they got time and energy they would tell their children the names of the models, the charts and the pictures and the story behind them. I also learned that the older children used these models, pictures and charts as a source of information for their school assignments. Mother Lemlem had a story to tell:

At one time, my eight year old son and his classmates were asked by their teacher to write about a country which they thought could find information. My son chose to write about Ethiopia. He did his best to collect data about Ethiopia from the Internet and other sources. But the most important source he used was the information we provided him and the models, the charts and the pictures we have at home. He was really very enthusiastic and curious to use what we told him and what he saw in our home. You know, his teacher gave him nine out of
ten and she commented that he had done one of the best works in his class. You see, from that time on, he is so delighted to talk and to answer questions about Ethiopia. You see, this is how these things serve as a teaching and learning tools. (Mother Lemlem, July, 1999)

While conducting an observation in the home of the six year old, Binyam, I pointed to a picture of an Ethiopian king by the name of Menelik and asked him what he knew about him. He told me that he was the king who led the battle of Adwa between Ethiopia and Italy where Italy was decisively defeated. This is one example that shows how the immigrant Ethiopian parents were trying to inform their children about the history and other aspects of Ethiopia. Other than this, many parents had video-cassettes which showed various religious and cultural occasions such as religious rituals, wedding ceremonies, dances, and music of various cultural groups. Furthermore, all the six children have Ethiopian traditional attires. Three of the children proudly showed me their Ethiopian costumes. They told me that they wore them when on Ethiopian holidays such as Ethiopian New Year known as “Enkutatash”; however, the parents expressed a serious concern about the lack of adequate materials such as books, artifacts, collections of children’s songs and stories reflecting Ethiopian culture. In spite of the effort they are exerting to introduce their children to the language and the culture of Ethiopia, the result was not up to their expectations. They all believed that they needed material and technical support to maintain their language and culture. This implies that there is much to be done to respond to the demands of Ethiopian immigrant parents not only in Toronto but in the diaspora.
7.2.2.1. ETHIOPIAN SYLLABARIES

Observing the Ethiopian alphabet chart posted on the walls of the bedrooms of the children in this study was of particular interest to me. The Ethiopian alphabet contains 231 major syllabaries or symbols, each representing a sound or spoken syllable. Once children recognize the shapes and the sounds of these symbols, they will not have difficulty to read words or simple sentences because unlike the English alphabet each symbol stands for a sound, that is, there is no problem of spelling.

One of the parents' interview questions related to whether the parents were interested in teaching the Ethiopian syllabaries to their children and if so, how they did it. They all said that they were interested in teaching reading Amharic to their children. But this was not an easy task for them. As they indicated, not only the children do not speak Amharic but also the they did not have a special techniques of teaching except showing the syllabaries and saying the names. Mother Mekidus and Father Arega said that in spite of their constant effort in teaching the Ethiopian syllabaries to their children, their children did not recognize their shapes and sounds. Only two parents (Father Tasew, Father Belete) said that their children were able to recognize some of the sounds and the shapes of syllabaries. Other parents said that they had a plan to do so in the future. In fact, all the six pairs of parents believed that children could learn reading and writing at early age. Some of them gave examples from their own childhood experiences in the priests' school in Ethiopia where they learned the syllabaries starting from age four. All the six children knew how to write their names in Amharic But the parents wanted more than that.
7.2.2.2. STORIES

Apart from displaying artifacts and pictures and making efforts to teach the Ethiopian syllabaries, many parents believed that telling Ethiopian children's stories was another way of familiarizing their children with the people, the animals, culture, the values, the history and the geography of Ethiopia. When asked what language they used when telling stories, they indicated that for short stories they used Amharic language because even though the children, except one, did not speak Amharic they understood it when someone spoke to them. If the stories are long and a bit complicated, they used English. I have also observed this in some of the homes I visited. Many of the parents said that telling their own childhood stories such as how they played, how they were disciplined, how they helped their parents and their siblings, how they respected God, their parents and senior persons was very useful to familiarize their children with the heritage of Ethiopia. Almost all the parents said that their children enjoyed hearing about their childhood experiences. Those parents who escaped from Ethiopia on foot said that their children enjoyed and loved to hear their stories during their journey. Mother Lemlem spoke about how her children loved to hear her childhood experiences and her journey in the desert:

You see, my children really love to hear mine and my husband's childhood stories and we tell them. No other Ethiopian stories are so interesting and enjoyable to them as that of my own childhood stories. I use these stories to teach them about some of the Ethiopian cultures. I tell them how I obeyed my parents, elder siblings and neighbors without saying "no". I tell them how I stood up and gave my seats to my parents and elder siblings when they entered our homes. I tell them how I helped and respected older people. You know, my children also love to hear about my journey from Ethiopia to a neighboring country while escaping. They always ask me a lot of questions: "mom did you see lions when you were walking in the forests? Did you see a hyena? How did you escape the hyena?" You know, they ask you all sorts of interesting questions. For example, I told Derge that there was no water to drink when we were traveling in the desert. He asked, "why didn't you buy Coca Cola?" (Laughed). (Mother Lemlem, July, 1999)
Almost all the parents said that the stories that they were telling to their children were oral stories that they knew of from their childhood and from their personal experiences as adults. They expressed the need for Ethiopian storybooks for their children and for their future grandchildren written both in English and in Amharic.

7. 2.2.3. PLAY

Regardless of race, class, ethnicity, age and gender, children engage in play all over the world. How they play and what they use to play differs depending on their ages, cultures, religions, beliefs, and the economic situations in the place where they live. For young children play is an avenue for learning societies’ values, attitudes, beliefs, knowledge and skills. Many parents in this study believed that encouraging their children to play and imitate how Ethiopians perform certain things would help them to become familiar with the culture. For example, while I was conducting an observation in the home of the five-year-old child, Selamawit, I saw her and her mother, Asegedech, playing what is known as “ika, ika chewata” (role playing with used house utensils and other materials in a group of two or more children). In such play, acting out the coffee ceremony is very common especially for little girls. In fact, the coffee ceremony in Ethiopia is a special ritual during which people, especially women share their personal joy and problems with their neighbors as an emotional outlet. So every time a coffee ceremony is held, it is important to invite neighbors or friends who live nearby. Since Selamawit did not have siblings to play with, her mother acted as a sibling and they played together. While Selamawit was conducting the coffee ceremony her mother acted as a neighbor. As Hyun (1998, p. xiv) writes, “culture shapes the nature of a child’s play and its subsequent development phenomena”. Since it is cultural in Ethiopia to call a
neighbor every time one makes coffee, Selamawit called her neighbor, in this case, her mother.

One of the parents' ways of teaching their children about Ethiopia is by encouraging them to play roles and games in the Ethiopian way. But this does not mean that they do not encourage them to play with or to work with numerous ready made play materials they have in their homes. In each of the homes that I observed, there were plenty of educational and play materials which the children used in many ways: to construct, to fix, to count, to talk about, to hold, to move, to ride on, to draw on and paint with. Looking at the numerous play materials that their children had at home, I asked the parents how they could compare their own childhood play experiences with those of their children. Many of them said that although they did not have ready made materials such as their children had, they recalled how they played by using natural things from their environments such as clay, sand, water, leaves, sticks, soils of different colors, straws, grasses, cotton cord or string, animal and human hairs. Many of the parents described how they played with used materials such as rags, ropes, balls made of old fabrics, pots and baskets of various kinds that they found in their surroundings. I asked them how much they enjoyed playing with these natural things from their surroundings. Almost all of them believed that the enjoyment they gained out of playing with natural things such as leaves, stones, woods, seeds of various kinds, clay and water from their surroundings was no less than the enjoyment that their children gained by playing with many ready made materials.

Based on his experiences with his daughter, Father Mesfin argues that giving too many play materials to children does not give much enjoyment as children do not appreciate them. He said that he used to buy play materials whenever his daughter asked him to do
so. Then he noticed how she played with the materials for a short period of time and started getting bored as she was expecting to be given new materials. When he was unable to buy toys or play materials, she used to cry and become cranky. So he strongly suggested that parents who buy toys for their children periodically should stop doing that. He believes that since doing this may harm children, it is better to buy just adequate quality materials that they could play with repeatedly.

Father Mesfin’s concern reminded me of a little girl of four years with whom I was working in the daycare in Toronto. Unless the mother bought a play material or a toy from a nearby kiosk almost every day, the little girl used to refuse to come to the classroom. Even if she did, she usually would become cranky and unhappy while interacting with other children and teachers for almost the whole day. So Father Mesfin’s advice should be taken seriously. In fact, this issue can lead to a future research question: How advantageous is it to buy toys for young children periodically?

7.3. POST ADJUSTMENT EXPERIENCES AT ECECS

As indicated in the introduction of this chapter, while I examined the perspectives of teachers, the parents and my own observation notes on post adjustment experiences of the children in the ECECS, among other things, I came across four major themes: a) the physical organization of the classrooms; b) the children’s activities during free activity period; c) the post adjustment behaviors of the children and their favorite activities as perceived by their teachers; d) the interconnectedness of the children’s experiences at home and at ECECS and its implications for the classroom curriculum and
teaching/learning processes. Each of these themes and related issues is discussed in the rest of the present chapter.

7.3.1. THE PHYSICAL ORGANIZATION OF THE CLASSROOMS

As I indicated in the methodology chapter, one of the focuses of my observations in the ECES was the physical organization of the classrooms because children’s experience in ECES has a lot to do with the organization of classroom settings. I observed the physical organization of the six classrooms and some of the related experiences of the children. But it is beyond the scope of this thesis to include specific information for each classroom. Since the materials and the experiences of the children in the six classrooms had much in common, I chose to show a more general picture.

Usually, the physical organization of ECECS includes the furniture, the division of the space, the educational/play materials and the way they are arranged. As Cameron (1989, p. 46) writes, “A key ingredient in children’s learning is the environment that supports and maintains their natural curiosity and momentum for growth. Therefore, it is essential to look quite closely at the facets of the environment”. Particularly, the materials in the classrooms have a lot to offer to children’s experiences. With regard to this issue, Teacher Susan made the following observations:

Children need to have things around them to feel, to smell, to taste, to manipulate, to climb up, to slide down, to jump on, to push, to pull, to bounce, to swing, to fix, to count, to dramatize, to talk about and so on. So educational/play materials are important to help children perform activities such as these. For sure, part of the children’s experience depends on the type of the materials that they use and the arrangement of the classroom. I would say that educational/play materials are building blocks of children’s experiences in early childhood education settings. (Teacher Susan, May, 1999)

What Susan is saying in the above excerpt relates to the beliefs of many
psychologists, educators and sociologists. Many assert that more than in any other level of education, the organization of the ECECS influences the social, emotional intellectual, physical, cultural, linguistic and artistic experiences/development of children (Boehm, & Weinberg, 1997; Clarke-Stewart, Gruber & Fitzgerald, 1994; Hohmann & Buckleitner, 1992; Montessori, 1973). The content of the curriculum and the teaching/learning process of early childhood education are connected with the physical settings of the classrooms and the materials in them. It is not only important to have adequate materials, but also the materials have to be “developmentally and culturally appropriate” (Hyun, 1998). In other words, the materials in the classrooms not only have to fit the age and the needs of the children, but also they have to reflect their cultural and the linguistic backgrounds.

I will begin with the furniture and the arrangement of the space in the classrooms. Basically, in each of the six classrooms there were child-sized chairs, tables, shelves, cupboards and low toilets and sinks. Each classroom’s space was divided into activity areas such as dramatic play/role play areas with kitchen sets, baby dolls, stuffed animals of various kinds, shopping carts, housekeeping sets, play food sets, puppets of various kinds and dresses; arts and crafts areas with construction papers, crayons, paints, brushes and scissors; book shelves and shelves with picture books of different colors and sizes; blocks and Lego areas with building blocks of various sizes and colors, construction sets, wooden railway sets; water table areas with water play sets; sand box table areas with sand play sets; manipulative material areas with puzzles of different kinds, plastic construction materials, stringing beads, pegboards and play dough of different colors. Each classroom has an open space with carpet for circle time and other activities. On the
walls of each classroom, one finds various pictures such as alphabet trains, pictures of people, children and adults, animals, farm animals and wild animals, dinosaurs, cars, airplanes, children's own drawings and paintings and charts of their birth dates.

While observing these materials in the classrooms, many questions came to my mind. They were questions similar to those Woods, Boyle & Hubbard (1999) suggest to be kept in mind when one looks at an ECECS with children of different cultural, racial and linguistic backgrounds: Are there bilingual/multilingual story books in the book corners? Are there artifacts and equipment that represent the cultures of the children? Are there print materials in the classroom that represent the languages of the children? Are there dressing up clothes in the dramatic play center that represent some of the cultures of the children? Are there puzzles that show the different continents of the world, Asia, America, Africa, Europe and Australia?

I have observed bilingual books, posters that show children of different races, posters on which statements such as “We are all the same under the sky” and “We are all beautiful” are written. I have also observed posters which show greetings in different languages, storybooks with pictures of children races: Asian, Caucasian and Black. I have observed puzzles which show different faces of children; however, these materials were not found in every classroom that I observed. As indicated by some teachers one of the reasons for this is shortage of budget (for example Teachers Susan). The other reason is the shortage of the multicultural materials in the market itself (Teacher Diane).

One may raise the question: how does the explanation in this section relate to the experiences of the children in this study? I strongly believe that the physical organization of the classrooms has a strong relationship with the experiences of every child in the
classroom and the children in this study are not exceptional. Part of what they learn and
do is influenced by the materials and the way the classroom is organized or arranged. As
indicated elsewhere, more than any level of education, the physical organization of the
ECECS and the materials are part and parcel of the curriculum. For example, the presence
or the absence of multicultural materials in the classroom can inform a reader whether or
not the classroom curriculum reflects the children's cultural background. In many ways
the activities of the children are seen in relation to the materials and the organization of
the classroom. For example, as I indicated in Section, 7.3.2, Selamawit, one of the
participant children, was demonstrating Ethiopian coffee ceremony because there were
cups and pots in the classroom. In fact, describing the settings of the classroom or
showing the picture of the classroom will help readers to understand the daily activities of
children in classroom as discussed below and the children in this study are not
exceptional.

7.3.2. THE CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES

One of the exciting and interesting things in an ECECS is observing children being
highly involved/absorbed in various activities by using materials in classrooms. During
free activity period, I observed children choosing whatever materials they were interested
in and engaging themselves, individually or in a groups, in various activities such as
dramatizing, role playing, drawing, painting, coloring, cutting, building and fitting Lego,
floating light objects and sinking heavy ones in water, pouring water from one jug to
another, creating various shapes from wet sand, fixing puzzles of various kinds, flipping
pages of books, looking at pictures and stringing beads. While observing this, I mainly
focused on the movements and the activities of children in my study who were children of
Ethiopian origin. In so doing, I was able to see how they demonstrated and reflected their home cultures in some of their activities in the different areas of the classrooms. For example, in the dramatic area, I observed the five year-old Selamawit demonstrating the Ethiopian coffee ceremony with one of her girl friends by using the cups and the pots available there. As any typical Ethiopian woman does in a coffee ceremony ritual, she was inviting her friend for coffee and pretending that she was burning incense. What she was doing here was that she was replicating her experiences at home through her experiences in the ECECS. I also observed the six year-old Biniyam drawing the Ethiopian flag and coloring it with green, red and yellow colors and going to his teacher to tell her that he had drawn an Ethiopian flag. In the dramatic play area again, I observed Bethelihem pretending that she was soothing her newly born brother by singing in the Ethiopian way as her mother did. From these activities, one could observe how children bring their home culture or experiences into the classroom settings. In other words, from these activities one could observe how some of the experiences of children in ECECS are interconnected with their experience in their homes. Understanding and recognizing the interconnection of children’s experiences at home and in ECES and encouraging them to share each others’ experiences contribute to inclusiveness in the curriculum of the classroom.

7.3.3. TEACHERS’ PERCEPTIONS OF THE CHILDREN’S BEHAVIORS AND THEIR FAVORITE ACTIVITIES

In addition to my observations in the classrooms, all the six teachers reported that like with many of the children of immigrant families and other children in their classrooms, the children in this study were well-adjusted. Teacher Diane started her explanation by
being critical of some people who think that many children of recent immigrant families are trouble-makers at school and at home. She said that was not true and argued that once they become adjusted to the classroom situations, many of them are humble, cooperative and easy to work with. According to her, what one needs to work with children of recent immigrant families is to be sensitive and knowledgeable in accommodating their experiential background in the classroom.

For more understanding of the post adjustment experiences of each child in my study, I asked the teachers for their perspectives on the characteristics and favorite activities of each child. Teacher Susan described the four year-old Derege, as a negotiator, an advisor, a leader, a communicator, a joy in the classroom, informative, cooperative, friendly, confident with very high self-esteem. She also described him as a child who shows concern for other children with empathy for those who are younger than he is, especially when they cry and feel uncomfortable. She admired him for his respect for classroom rules and his love of fairness. For example, she gave a succinct example about what he did at one time:

You know, a couple of weeks ago some kids were throwing toys out of a window and neither of the teachers noticed this. Derege immediately went to the children and said, “It is not OK to throw the toys out. You need to make sure that you don’t do that”. Then he immediately went to the teacher and said, “They are throwing toys out of the window but I told them it is not OK”. You know, he is such a very responsible little guy. He knows what he is doing. You see, that is why I say he is one of those children who are very well-adjusted in our classroom. (Teacher Susan, May, 1999)

Describing Derege’s favorite activities, Teacher Susan stated that he loved to play with cars and truck toys, knew the English alphabet very well because he loved to work with alphabet puzzles, to sing alphabet songs and to write his name, and he was good at holding books and pretending as if he was reading. Teacher Susan was also aware of his
parents' effort in trying to teach him reading and writing at home. What Teacher Susan said about Derege, in fact, goes with my own observations at home and at ECECS. I have observed him playing with a lot of toy cars and trucks both at home and at the ECECS. From their accounts and from what I observed, his parents really emphasized the importance of reading and writing from early on. They spent quite a lot of time trying to teach him the alphabets, both English and Amharic alphabets. They wanted him to be bilingual and bi-literate. Derege also has an older brother from whom he imitates ways of doing things.

Teacher Mary's and Teacher Jeanette's opinions were similar to those of Teacher Diane concerning the behaviors of children of recent immigrant families. They also believed that once they adjusted to the classroom situations, many of them are easy to redirect. I asked Teacher Mary what she meant by easy to redirect. She explained what it meant:

You know, easy to redirect means easy to correct. For example, if a kid picks some violent behavior from a TV show and acts it out in the classroom, you tell her/him to stop that violent act. If s/he is a child easy to redirect, s/he would stop it quickly and rarely repeat it again. But if s/he is not an easy to redirect child, s/he might stop it for a while and repeat it again a few minutes later. This is what I mean when I say easy to redirect. (Mary, June, 1999)

Teacher Mary pointed out that she perceived Selamawit, as a little girl who was easy to redirect. She further used the following words to describe her: peaceful, calm, relaxed, communicative, empathetic, helping, polite, sharing, tidy, cooperative, patient, confident, smart and agreeable. She also indicated Selamawit's favorite activities to include such things as roleplay in the dramatic center, looking at picture books, making puzzles, singing and story telling and listening to stories. In fact, while conducting observations in
Selamawit's home, one of the things that I observed was her interest in helping her mother in what she did at home and her empathy towards her little sister. For example, when her mother was sweeping the floor, Selamawit said, "mom can I help you sweeping the floor?". When her little sister was crying, she went to her and tried to give her a soft teddy bear and said "Oh! I am sorry. Don't cry baby". So some of the things that Teacher Mary said about Selamawit is consistent to what observed in the home environment.

Teacher Audrey considered the six year-old Biniyam as a joyful little boy, very friendly, stable, and sensitive. Speaking on his favorite play, she pointed out that he liked building blocks and playing with wooden railways. She admired his ability in counting and simple adding. When I observed Biniyam in his home, I saw him working with a machine that taught him counting, simple adding and reading the alphabet. Arega, Biniyam's father said that he wanted his child to read and write well and that was why he bought him a toy machine that could help his son to do reading and counting activities.

Teacher Jeanette perceived Bethelihem as a gentle, good-hearted, empathetic, cooperative, interactive, friendly, relaxed and affectionate little girl. She also pointed out that Bethelihem loved stringing beads, cutting and pasting and playing in the dramatic play center acting like a mother and caring for babies. This remark matches with my observation of Bethelihem while she was playing in the dramatic play center pretending that she was soothing her newly born brother by singing in the Ethiopian way as her mother did.

While explaining about the five year old Tefera, Teacher Barbara remarked: "Sometimes he followed classroom rules but other times he did not, sometimes he is
caring but sometimes he is not. Well, that is okay for his age. But generally, he is a very
attentive child who usually gets engaged in activities for quite a long time”.
Teacher Barbara was astonished by Tefera’s ability in computer games, writing, counting, adding,
subtracting and multiplying numbers and said:

You know if you ask him what is four plus five he would tell the answer
automatically. If you ask him what is three times four he will tell you twelve.
You know, he is really very good in numbers and writing. I think his parents are
working hard to teach him all these things. (Teacher, Barbara, June, 1999)

From what I observed in Tefera’s home, his parents were working hard to teach him
reading, writing and numbers. In fact, Tefera’s father, Tasew, believed that from his
experience of working with his son, he came to believe that a child could be able to write
even before s/he read. So he told me that he continuously encouraged his son to write
even though he was not yet reading except recognizing the alphabet names and shapes.

Teacher Diane described the six year old Tirist as fair, gentle, tidy, interactive, happy,
playful and loving. She also pointed out that Tirist loved art work, roleplay in the
dramatic play center, dancing, singing and listening to and telling stories. When I
observed Tirist in her home, she showed me storybooks and pictures that she drew and
painted. She also told me stories that she heard in her daycare.

Tirist’s parents were interested to teach her reading and writing. In fact, Father
Belete, her father, showed me his schedule for the different activities that Tirist was
expected to do. Reading was one of them. Father Belete shared with me some of the
experiences he had when helping Tirist to read English words:

I had a book with pictures and words like plate, fork, spoon and knife. One day I
was teaching Tirist how to read the word “knife”. I told her that the letter “K”
was silent in that word “knife” and she should not say it. She got so surprised
and upset and asked me: “Ababa (means dad) if you don’t use the letter “K”
what is it doing there?” Please take out “K” and write “nife”. When she asked
me what "K" was doing there, I could not give her adequate reasons because I am not a linguist. She kept on saying: "Ababa take it out! take it out! take it out!". You know, I was not prepared what to say. When I went to my office the next morning, the first thing that I asked my English speaking colleagues was whether they knew why the letter "K" was there, I mean in the word "knife". They told me that it was written in that way from the beginning. I was not satisfied with the kind of explanation they gave me. I think I must go to the library and find out the reasons. You know, it is not easy to teach children how to read English words. (Father Belete, July, 1999)

From the narratives of the teachers, the parents and my own observations, three main themes can be identified in this section of the thesis: a) the perspectives of the teachers with regard to the children's post adjustment behaviors were positive suggesting that the children in this study have adjusted well to the ECES situations; b) all the parents were interested to see their children read and write; c) the children's activities at ECECS and at home were more or less interconnected. The next section discusses the implications of the interconnectedness of the children's experiences at home and at ECECS.

7.4. THE INTERCONNECTEDNESS OF THE CHILDREN'S EXPERIENCES AT HOME AND AT ECECS: IMPLICATIONS

Children are like a bridge that connects homes and schools. (Mother Asegedech, June, 1999)

Both parents and teachers agreed that many times they observed a relationship between the experiences of children at home with those in ECECS. They emphasized that in many ways the children's experiences both at home and ECECE are interconnected or interrelated. The teachers stressed that as with many other children in the classrooms, the Ethiopian children in this study tell stories and sing songs that they hear or learn from home; they narrate experiences that they come across during the weekends and holidays
with their parents; they talk about their parents’ trips to their country of origin; they talk about what their parents bring from their country of origin; they talk about events, holidays and celebrations at their homes and most of all they talk a lot about the experiences of their mothers as related to their experiences. In fact, what mother says and does is very important in the child’s play and activities such as talking, story telling, role playing, drawing and painting because in the early years of the child’s life the mother is her/his world. S/he tries to do what her/his mother does and echoes what she says. For example, when she was playing the role of a mother with her playmate, a little girl whose mother was working for her doctoral degree said: “I am the mother and you are the little girl and whatever you want to do you cannot because I am studying” (Cameron & Peetoom, 1994:27). The mother must have told her little daughter that because she was busy studying, she could not do everything that the little girl asked her to do. So what the mother was doing and what she was saying was reflected in the little girl’s play. For young children of early childhood age, the mother is the whole world and is the priority in their lives. What are the implications of this to the teaching/learning process in ECECS? This question reminded me of a paper which I presented at an International Conference on “Mother and Education” in 1999 at Brock University, St. Catherines. The title of the paper was: “There is More in Mom as a Teacher: Her Image in Early Childhood Education Classroom Settings” (Wubie, 1999b). The major theme that I wanted to convey was that mothers’ images in ECECS can serve to facilitate the teaching/learning process. So I believe that it is important for early childhood educators to consider the role of the mothers’ image in ECECS to facilitate the teaching/learning process.

Many of the parents also made observations with regard to how their children bring
Their experiences from ECECS to their homes. Mother Asegedech's narrative explains this:

When Selamawit plays alone, sometimes she walks and talks like her teacher in the daycare. She says, "children it is time to tidy up" and then she goes on singing, "this is the way we tidy up, we tidy up, we tidy up, this is the way we tidy up, we tidy up, we tidy up", you know. Sometimes she would say, "children it is circle time. Please sit on the carpet". Other times, she would say "Share, You have to share". She also speaks like other children in her daycare. She would say, "stop it. This is mine. Don't touch it" and the like, you know. I learn some songs and games that she brings from the daycare and the kindergarten. Her teacher also told me that she talks and acts like ...like me in the daycare, you know. I believe that children are like a bridge that connects homes and the schools. (Mother, Asegedech, July, 1999)

Mother Asegedech indicated that usually her daughter said and acted what she heard and saw in her ECECS even while she was alone. Father Mesfin also has a very interesting story that illustrates how what children do at home is interconnected with what they see or experience in ECECS. According to his account, while his daughter Selamawit was about two years old, she used to stay in a family daycare. Every time she came home from the daycare, she would spread a towel on the floor and act as if she was praying in the way Muslims or Orthodox Christians pray by bowing down and standing up repeatedly. At first he and her mother could not figure out what she was trying to do. They were puzzled about it. One day when they went to the family daycare to pick her up, they saw the woman who was taking care of her praying by bowing down and standing up on a carpet that she spread on the floor. She was a Muslim. Then, they realized that Selamawit was acting out what her teacher in the family daycare was doing when she prayed.

What is interesting here is that children as young as two years old can bring their experiences from early childhood education and care settings to their homes. Figure 2
shows some of the areas of experiences that children can bring to ECECS or take from ECECS to their homes. Woods, Boyle and Hubbard (1999) emphasized that children of this age more than any other level take their home experiences to classroom settings and vice versa. The question is: what is the implication of the interconnectedness of children's experiences at home and at ECECS? While analyzing and interpreting the data

![Diagram showing the interconnectedness of children's experiences at home and at ECECS]

**Figure 2: The Interconnectedness of Children's Experiences at Home and at ECES**
I obtained from the teachers and the parents, I developed this concept: the interconnectedness of children's experiences at home with those of their experiences in ECECS is a source of classroom curriculum content. This, in turn, led me to the theory that the interconnectedness of the experiences of children of diverse culture and language at home and at ECECS is a source of inclusive curriculum. The question is how? The answer is highlighted in the following section.

7.4.1. HOME EXPERIENCES: A SOURCE OF INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM

The term "curriculum" is defined and understood in different ways (Connelly & Lantz, 1991; Eisner & Vallance, 1974; Fantini, 1982; Johnson, 1974; Lewy, 1991). To mention a few, curriculum is a plan of action to achieve desired goals (Ornstein & Hunkins, 1988); curriculum is "a repertoire of learning experiences, planned and organized according to the programs' educational goals" (Spodek and Saracho, 1991, p. ix); curriculum is a socially constructed knowledge (Die, Jame, Jame-Wilson, Krumanchery & Zink., 2000); curriculum is situational and is subjected to the concept that an individual educator holds (Connelley & Lantz, 1991); "curriculum is a person's experience in a setting" (Brubaker, 1982, p. 2); Curriculum has a lot to do with students' experiences (Die, 1996; Pike & Selby, 1995, 1999b).

Although not all the teachers in this study thought of the experiences of children as part of classroom curriculum content, two of the teachers, Teacher Diane and Teacher Susan, believed in how children's experiences at home can be a part of the classroom curriculum. They are well versed in articulating how children's home experiences can be a part of the classroom curriculum. I would like to refer to these teachers as exemplary as far as their ideas of connecting children's home experiences with classroom curriculum is
concerned. They both believed that when children with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds bring their experiences to the classrooms, the classroom curriculum would be more inclusive. Explaining their conceptualization of inclusive curriculum, they both pointed out that inclusive curriculum must consider equality in race, gender, culture and language, learning about each other's culture and knowledge and accepting their differences. They also pointed out that inclusive curriculum needs to be free of stereotyping.

As many writers have discussed, one of the aims of inclusive curriculum at any level of education is to enable students to tear down the barriers or walls of race, gender, class, culture, language, disability and ethnicity and to promote respect to each other's differences (Aina, 1994; Dei, 1996; de Melendez & Osterg, 1997; Derman-Sparks, 1993; Ebbeck & Boahm, 1999; Newman & Roskos, 1994; Ramsey, 1995; York, 1991). Teacher Diane and Teacher Susan stressed that teachers should value the experience of every child in the classroom and encouraged her/him to participate fully wherever possible. "Only a participatory pedagogy will allow students to develop the kinds of understandings necessary to be healthy, humane, and productive members of society" (Cameron & Manju, 1997, p.123). Cummins (1996, p. iii) also writes that "paying proper attention to students' experiences in teaching/learning process can "create a context of empowerment in classroom interactions". For a child to be comfortable and learn effectively, early childhood education teachers should build on what s/he already knows or on her/his experiences (Mock, 1986). From this point of view, if little children in ECECS are given particular attention when they transfer their home experiences to ECECS, they feel "empowered" and develop "a sense of belonging, a sense of connection
and a sense of identification” (Dei, 1996) with the classroom situation.

As indicated in the above paragraph, Teacher Diane and Teacher Susan believed that culturally and linguistically diverse children’s experiences at home serve as a source of inclusive/multicultural curriculum content in classroom settings. This raises the question of how to develop this content. Teacher Susan started to answer this question by being critical of the widely used method of promoting inclusive/multicultural education in ECES that gives much emphasis on celebrations of different holidays, showing dances in different cultures and preparing foods from different countries. She holds the view that the mere emphasis on this is inadequate to promote inclusiveness in early childhood education curriculum. Her criticism on this issue is more or less similar to what Aina (1994) writes. According to Aina (1994), the mere celebration of holidays, focussing on dances and food is not adequate. Explaining the contemporary situation of multiculturalism in ECES, he stresses how “multiculturalism (inclusiveness) has become synonymous in many people’s mind with dinner, dress and dance- the three Ds” (Aina, 1994:19). Teacher Susan’s criticism of the method of promoting multiculturalism is consistent with what Mock (1986, p. 7) writes: “multiculturalism does not mean providing exotic examples of a variety of cultures; but rather ensuring that the young child feels comfortable and can function well in more than one cultural context”. Caccia (1975, p. 200) also writes that “A change in attitude is really what multiculturalism is all about if it is to be something more than just a phrase, something more than just a program, something more than just a catchword”. When I probed Teacher Susan to suggest some other ways that she thought could help to promote inclusive/multicultural curriculum in ECECS, she shared these thoughts:
You know, linguistically and culturally diverse children bring their home experiences to early childhood education settings. For example, they bring stories that they hear from their family members; they bring cultural role play that they play at home; they bring songs from their country of origin that their parents sing to them. Yes, they do. They do it when they play individually or in a group during free activity period. They also do it during teacher initiated activity period like during circle time or sharing time. So what I am saying here is that one of the ways of enriching inclusive curriculum in early childhood education settings is to give attention to and to have positive attitudes to the experience that each child brings to the classroom. I mean, we as teachers need to give a particular importance to this issue and create encouraging atmosphere in the classrooms to allow children to bring their experiences to the classrooms.

(Teacher Susan, May, 1999)

The point that Teacher Susan is trying to make is consistent with what I observed in the classrooms as stated in section 7.3.2 with regard to some of the activities of the children in different corners of the classrooms. In that section, I indicated how: the five year-old Selamawit played the Ethiopian traditional coffee ceremony with one of her girlfriends; how the six year-old Binyam drew the Ethiopian flag and showed it to his teacher; how the five year-old Bethelihem was playing the role of mother soothing her newly born brother by singing Ethiopian soothing songs that she heard from her mom.

Teacher Diane strongly believes that stories that children of diverse cultures and languages bring from home to ECECS can promote inclusiveness in the classroom curriculum. She believes that telling stories is one of the areas where parents can be involved. In fact, she recalled an Ethiopian story always told by Tirsit during circle time. According to Teacher Diane, Tirsit used to say, “be as strong as an ant, be as wise as a woman, eat like locust and take this old stool”. But as she confessed she could not understand what Tirsit was always saying until she asked her mother and got clarification. She considered the story very illuminating. As she narrated it, in Tirsit’s story there was a very ill father who was about to die. He had six sons. He made a will so the that five of
the six sons could share the land and the houses he had. But he did not give land or houses to his oldest son, Tadele, whom he loved so much. Instead, he wished him three wishes: he wished him to be as strong as an ant; he wished him to be wise as a woman; he wished him to eat like a locust and finally he gave him an old stool on which he used to sit for many years. Although Tadele was very respectful to his father, he was dissatisfied with his will. He could not imagine being as strong as a very small creature like ant; he could not imagine being as wise as a woman where many people in his community considered women as unwise; he could not imagine how his father gave him that old stool which was about to break. So he decided to leave his birth place because he did not want to live poor in his community unlike his brothers. On his way, he met a very old man. While conversing with him, he told him why and where he was going. The old man explained to him how his father loved him so much as to give him such wonderful wishes and to give him an old stool on which he used to sit for many years. The old man kept on explaining what each of the wishes meant: an ant is not only a hardworking creature but she is also strong enough to carry a dead body of another ant which is heavier than her own weight whereas a person cannot carry a dead body of another person even if the dead person is smaller than her/him; women are wise because some people in Ethiopia believe that they have an ability to reason quickly in comparison to men; a locust eats so much because it is healthy. In short, the old man told Tadele that his father wished him to be very strong, to be very wise and to be very healthy. He further advised him to break that old stool and see if there was some kind of treasure in it. Tadele was convinced by the old man’s advice because culturally old age in Ethiopia is synonymous with wisdom. So he went back to his home and broke the stool. He found a lot of gold in it which made him
the wealthiest man in his community. Having narrated the story, Teacher Diane, then, pointed out the messages in it: a) not to judge things by what they appear, in this case the smallness of the ant; b) women are wise too; and c) there is wisdom in old age.

What Teacher Susan and Teacher Diane narrated show how children play the role of bringing new content to the curriculum of the classrooms. Particularly, experiences that are brought by culturally and linguistically diverse children are a source of inclusiveness because they adds the variety of the contents of the classroom curriculum. In general, as Hyun (1998, p. 13) writes, each child’s unique background can serve as “a powerful instructional tool for all children in classrooms”; however, this does not mean that children always bring good things from home to ECES. For example, as discussed in Chapter Five, Section 5.5, there are instances during which young children say racist words or phrases in the classrooms. The question is: how can we make these instances part of the classroom curriculum? The answer to this question is discussed in the next section.

7.4.1.1. COMBATTING BUDDING RACISM: A SOURCE OF INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM

As discussed in Chapter Five, Section 5.5, at a very young age, children notice racial differences (Derman-Sparks, 1993/94; Ramsey, 1996; Siraj-Blatchford, 1994). “By two years of age, children not only notice color, they also ask questions about differences and similarities among people” (Derman-Sparks, 1993/94, p. 67). As also discussed in Chapter Five, Section 5.5, in ECECS one can come across instances during which little children say racist and sexist words. For example, some parents narrated what they heard from other people with regard to instances during which little children say/utter words related with elements of racism. Furthermore, many of the teachers indicated that they
have come across instances during which young children said racist and sexist words or phrases. Teacher Jeanette has the following to tell:

> You know, sometimes you hear some children saying things like "he is not nice because he black, boys don’t play in the home corner, you can’t do this because you are a girl", you know, they comment stuff like that. (Jeanette, July, 1999)

I have also come across a child of four and half-year old saying “black kids’ hairs look ugly”. At one time, I was showing pictures of different hair styles of children from different races: black, white and Asian, to a group of five children including this boy. In my explanation, I was trying to stress that all children in the pictures did have beautiful hair. The four and half year old child pointed his finger to a picture of a black child’s hair in the book and said, “That is not beautiful”. When I asked him why, he said, “Cos my mom told me that black kids’ hair looks funny and ugly”. Teacher Susan had more or less a similar experience with a child of five years old. According to her story, at one time while she was playing with a group of children, she and the children were saying “enie, meenie, miney, moe catch a tiger by the toe”. In the middle of the play a child said, “enie, meenie, miney, moe catch a ‘nigger’ by the toe”. Teacher Susan asked the child where he heard the word ‘nigger’. He told her that he heard it from his dad.

A mother also recalls her friend’s experiences in an ECES where little children say racist words. According to her account, her friend went to a daycare to participate in the celebration of her daughter’s birthday. She was sitting around a table where her daughter, the teachers and other children were sitting. She asked a little boy who was sitting near her what his name was. The little boy told her his name. Then she told him that her daughter always mentioned his name at home and she liked him so much. The little boy then said, “But I don’t like her”. The mother asked “Why?” The little boy answered,
“Because she is black”. According to the narrative of this mother, though the teachers heard what the little boy commented, they did not say or do anything. Probably, they took it for granted because he was such a small boy. I believe they would have made this instance part of their curriculum if they illustrated and talked about it. Here it is important to bear in mind that it is not only little white children who say racist words, but it is also little black children. In fact, as Siraj-Blatchford (1994, p. 7) writes, “Young children, both white and black absorb racist values as young as three years of age”. Teacher Barbara’s recollection can substantiate this theory:

It was lunch time. I was listening to news from a radio. A five year old little black boy came to me and said, “Why do you listen to this radio?” I said, “Why not?”. He said, “That is the white man’s garbage”. I was shocked to hear this from a five year old child. You see, racism does not come from one side. It comes from all directions. It is not only a white/black issue. It is an issue that exists between all races: white, black, yellow and brown. I think we should try to fight racism that comes from all directions. (Teacher Barbara, June, 1999)

White, black or brown children can voice some racist words or phrases. The important question one should raise here is: are these the voices of children? As indicated elsewhere, the answer is automatically “no”. They are not the voices of children (Mock, 1986; King & Chipman, 1994). Instead, as Derman-Sparks (1993/94) writes, they are voices which emanated from other persons around them. For example, the little black boy mentioned by Teacher Barbara in the above excerpt, must have heard the comment he stated: “that is a white man’s garbage”, from adults or other children around him. In other words, children are like mirrors and tape recorders through which we could see adult’s behaviour and hear their voices. The voices could come from parents, from family members, from peers, from the neighbourhood and from the playground. The point that we should stress here is that the racist or the sexist words or phrases that very young and
innocent children say are not their creation. Rather, these children are echoing adults' voices around them. The moment a child utters a racist or sexist comment, teachers or persons who hear that comment start to question: where did s/he pick up that kind of comment? I think any person with common sense could understand that children's comments related to race are not their creation. This tells us to be careful in what we say and in what we do in the presence of children. In other words, as an adult it is essential to be conscious of one's own "prejudices, stereotypes and biases". It is not only teachers that need to be prepared to deal with diversity but also parents should be prepared to deal with diversity as well. "Racism attacks young children's growing sense of group, as well as an individual's identity" (Derman-Sparks, 1994, p. 68). Parents need to realize this. They need to realize that to have positive attitude toward each other and to interact in harmony are sources of emotional and mental health for their children.

Explaining the importance of anti-racist education at all levels, Dei (1996, p.11-12) has to say this: "I believe that unless anti-racism education is integrated with family life, home-day care, schools and the various communities in which we live and work, all that can be hoped for is a fragmented, top down approach to social change". In general, to eliminate racism and sexism from the face of the earth, the attitudes of people in every society need to be changed. When can this happen? I would not dare to predict the time. I think it is when everybody respects everybody for who s/he is. The major question in this particular section of the thesis, however, is: what contribution can we make to lessen budding racism and sexism in young children's minds in our capacity as early childhood educators? One of the answers to this could be promoting inclusiveness in classroom curriculum by using events times during which children utter certain racist or sexist
comments. Woods, Boyle and Hubbard(1999) write that the happening of certain events have "pedagogical advantage"; they can be used as a centre of interest to teach, to raise issues of racism and to discuss them. These writers also suggest that teachers should not ignore the issue by saying "don't talk like that" to children who utter racist words. Rather, they should discuss it or talk about it with the children.

Teacher Susan has similar suggestions. According to her, if a teacher hears a child saying "I don't like to play with that Chinese boy or with that black boy" or with that white boy, she would not try to silence the child by whispering "sh, sh, sh, don't say that anymore or I don't want you to say that kind of thing anymore". Rather, she would make that instance one of the topics of the day and talk about it openly over and over again. She would encourage each child to tell how children of different faces and colour could be good friends. She would use pictures and stories to show the faces of children of different races and discuss how everybody is beautiful and loveable. For example, when the little white boy, mentioned earlier, commented that he did not like the little girl because she was black, the teachers could have made the issue a centre of interest and used it to discuss how children should love each other regardless of their colors.

Similarly, when the five year old black boy commented that his teacher should not listen to a "white man's garbage", the teacher could have used the statement as one of the topics of the day. The idea behind this whole explanation is that anytime a child says or does something unacceptable in a classroom, that unacceptable issue will become one of the topics of the day or the topics of the week to be discussed and talked about so that children would understand that it would not be acceptable to say or to do that kind of comment or action. I strongly believe that doing this is not only a way of enriching
inclusive curriculum in ECECS, but also a way of combatting elements of racism in the minds of young children.

7.4.1.2. PARENTS' PARTICIPATION: A SOURCE OF INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM

Although shared responsibility between home and school is essential across levels of education, it is more crucial at the early childhood education level. Children getting service at such a level are more attached to their homes and parents and need more attention compared to children in higher levels. "A positive connection between home and child (ECES) provides a solid base from which the child can develop a feeling of security and attachment" (Wilson, 1997, p. 44). Particularly, in the first few days or weeks of the child's arrival in the ECES, a shared responsibility between parents and teachers is crucial. As indicated in Chapter Six of this thesis, the narratives of the teachers, the parents and my own experience show that children whose cultures and languages are different from the cultures and experiences of the ECES's staff and children, encounter more uneasiness during their transition from home to ECES as compared to the transition of children whose languages and cultures are similar to those of the ECES. In other words, the study show that when children and staff in ECES are from the same cultural and linguistic background, it is easier to communicate and understand each other which in turn makes the transition of children from home to ECES easier. It is true that in any ECES, the presence of caring and nurturing teachers is very important. But if children are not familiar with the language and the style of communication of the caring and nurturing teachers, it makes a difference in the way they interact them. In such cases, a strong partnership between parents and staff will
create a nurturing and emotionally stable situations for the children as teachers and parents can help each other to help them.

However, although a lot has been done to promote partnership between home and schools in North America, including Canada, due to social, economical, cultural, attitudinal and other related reasons, it has not been achieved as expected (Cataldo, 1987; Epstein, 1996; Wilson, 1997). As these authors emphasize, the factors that affect partnerships among schools, families and communities in North America include failure to plan for partnership on the part of educational institutions; lack of effective communication between schools, homes and communities; teachers’ conflicting attitudes such as thinking that they are more knowledgeable than parents; lack of time and energy on the part of parents and community members; family responsibilities, family size and marital status. As some parents in this study indicated, their own cultural beliefs that teachers have more authority and knowledge in the education of children than parents can be added to this list. Moreover, the issue of cultural, linguistic and racial barriers plays a role in the nature of relationships between minority parents and teachers (Bernhard, Lefebvre, Kilbride, Chud, Lange, 1998; Dei, Jame-Wilson, Krumanchery & Zine, 2000). As Neuman and Roska (1994) write, the fact that schools usually ask parents to participate in peripheral activities such as clerical tasks and field trips is a loss since parents could be a great source of inclusive/multicultural education if encouraged to participate to a greater extent. According to these writers, when parents from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds are encouraged to participate in the activities of ECES, they could contribute in activities such as singing songs, telling stories, bringing pictures of monuments and other historical things from their countries of origin, bringing
recipes, sitting on advisory committees and providing information about cultural lifestyles and beliefs thereby contributing to the promotion of inclusive curriculum. Cummins (1996, pp. 3-4) writes, "when educators and culturally diverse parents become genuine partners in children's education, this partnership repudiates the myth that culturally diverse parents are apathetic and do not care about their children's education". Many other researchers also argue that sound partnerships between parents and teachers have a positive impact on the participation of parents and in turn promote the positive experience/development of children (Bernhard & Freire, 1996; Bernhard, Lefebvre, Kilbride, Chud, & Lange, 1998; Bronfenbrenner, 1979a, 1979b; Edward, Loague, Loehr, & Roth, 1986; Endsley & Minish, 1991; Howes, 1991; Shpancer, 1997; Smith & Hubbard, 1988; Wilson, 1997).

When the Ethiopian parents were asked about their participation in the education and care of their children in ECES, many of them stated that their participation was limited to field trips. Some parents do not seem to believe that their participation in the education of their children in ECECS is that important because they do believe that teachers know best what to do with the education and care of their children in ECES. This may relate to the educational culture where these parents were brought up. In Ethiopia where these parents were brought up, in classroom teaching/learning situations, the teacher is the main source of knowledge; however, some other parents believe in the importance of participation but could not find time to participate. One of the mothers believed that her English is not fluent enough to work as a committee member and participate in activities that required a lot of speaking. From the parents' and the teachers' explanations, it seems that lack of time on the part of the parents and cultural and linguistic barriers play a role
in the limited participation of the Ethiopian first generation immigrant parent.

Particularly, the issue of cultural, linguistic and racial barriers plays a large role in limiting the participation of parents in school affairs (Akoto, 2000; Bernhard, Lefebvre, Kilbride, Chud, & Lange., 1998; Dei, Jame, Jame-Wilson, Krumanchery & Zink., 2000).

As indicated earlier, the parents said that their participation in the affairs of their children’s education and care in ECES is mainly limited to field trips. When it comes to the teachers’ perspectives on this issue, all of them believe in its importance as a source of inclusive curriculum. But they also indicated that in actual practice, many parents’ participation is mostly limited to field trips and celebration of children’s birthdays and this included the Ethiopian parents. According to them, the major reason for the low participation of parents in the education and care of their children in ECES was a lack of time. In general, while parents’ participation in ECES is important in promoting inclusive curriculum, the Ethiopian parents’ low participation in their children’s education and care at ECES limits their chances of adding some knowledge/skills to the curriculum of their children’s ECECS.

When I asked the parents about what they would like their children to learn in schools in general they had a lot to say. One of the things they emphasized was that they would like to see their children learn about the positive images of Africa. They believed that the mass media in North America usually misrepresents Africa by showing only the negative images and ignoring the positive side. They stressed that from early on, their children need to be familiar not only with the history and geography of North America and Europe, but the world at large. They argue that the topic of Africa and other developing countries should be included in the school curriculum at all levels. Their
perspectives on teaching about Africa agree with those of Prince (1996) who stresses the importance of including African issues in Canadian curriculum. In other words, the parents’ concern with regard to curriculum issue relates to the importance of bringing “the world/globe into classroom settings” (Pike & Selby, 1995, 1988, 1999a, 1999b).

Other things which the Ethiopian parents thought important to be included in the school curriculum were the issues of peace, human rights and equality. Because of the political hazards in their country of origin, Ethiopia, and the resultant experiences as refugees in neighbouring countries, amongst the things that the Ethiopian parents value most are peace, human rights and equality. So they have a particular interest in seeing their children and all other children learn about peace, human rights and equality. In our conversation on this issue, I asked them about the kind of role they as parents could play in the promotion of peace, human rights and equality. Although many of the parents have the interest to teach their children about peace, human rights and equality, they did not find it easy unless they get some kind of training as to how to do it. In other words, they believe that parents can teach their children about peace, human rights and equality if they get adequate information on how to do it. For example, Father Arega had to say this:

You see, people with refugee background really know how the presence of peace, human rights and equality in a country is valuable. As a person with refugee background, this is one of the things that I value most for my children. I think I need to teach my children how it feels to live in a country where you don’t find peace, human rights, equality and democracy. But you know, you need some kind of training on how to do it. (Father Arega, August, 1999)

Father Arega’s excerpt, reminded me of a project I undertook while writing a term paper for a course entitled: “Global Education: Theory and Practice”, instructed by Professor David Selby in 1997. The aim of the project was to teach twelve Ethiopian
immigrant mothers with refugee backgrounds how to teach their young children about peace in their home environment and evaluate the results. As with the parents in this study, those Ethiopian mothers with refugee backgrounds were so interested in learning and discussing the issue of promoting peace education in the home environment.

Obedience to parents and respect for elderly people are also among the most important values that the Ethiopian parents in this study affirmed. Though they believed that their children should be assertive, obedience to parents and respect for elderly people are values that cannot be negotiated. So they strongly suggest that the issue of obedience and respect for parents and elderly people should be seriously considered in the education of young children. Most of these parents stated that during their old age, they would not want to end up in senior homes. Rather, they would want their children to take care of them in their own homes by being around them as much as possible.

7.5. SUMMARY:

Five major issues were highlighted in this chapter. The first one is that after the children in this study adjusted to the culture and the language of the ECES, they return to their homes with new experiences. As the result of their new experiences they become agents of change in their home settings. Particularly, the changes that the children bring in the style of communication at home are significant. While parents prefer them to speak in the home language so as to retain their Ethiopian cultural heritage, the children prefer to speak in English. Most of the time, parents speak in their home language while the children respond in English. Other times, they both speak in mixed languages (Amharic and English). It seems that there is a lack of consistency in the pattern of the
communication at home. So dealing with the language issue is not found to be an easy thing. Except for one pair of parents whose daughter speaks her home language comparatively well, all the other parents fear that insisting children speak in their home language while they prefer to speak in English could bring confusion and frustration to their minds. Although all the teachers in this study believe that it is important for culturally and linguistically diverse children to speak their home languages, they do not think that it is part of their responsibilities to deal with home language.

The second issue is about the physical organization of the six classrooms I observed. Almost all of these classrooms are well arranged and equipped with materials that enable children to feel, to smell, to taste, to manipulate, to fix, to pour, to draw, to write, to count, to dramatize and to talk about; however, materials that reflect the children's cultural and linguistic backgrounds seem inadequate both in quantity and in variety. Although this may not be true in many of the ECES in Toronto, it may suggest the need for more attention on the issue.

The third issue is that the narratives of the teachers, the parents and my own observations in the children's home and classroom environments show that there is a strong connection between the experiences of the children at home with that of their experiences in the ECECS. This leads to the concept that children are like bridges that connect the home and the ECES. The major implication of this finding is that the experiences that are brought to the ECECS by culturally and linguistically diverse children are a source of classroom curriculum content in general and a source of inclusive curriculum in particular. From this, I was able to deduce a theory that young children in ECECS are also curriculum co-developers.
The fourth issue is that, the narratives of the teachers, the parents and my own experience show that sometimes children of early childhood education age utter racist and sexist words. However, one has to bear in mind that these racist and sexist words or phrases are not the voices of these little children. Rather, they are the voices of someone around them. Whatever the source of the problem, there is a need for early childhood educators and others concerned to contribute towards the effort of combatting the growth of the seeds of racism and sexism in the minds of innocent little children.

When little children say racist or sexist words in ECECS, it is important to include such words or phrases in the topics of the day or the week in the classroom settings and talk about them openly through various illustrations and examples so that children understand that it is not acceptable to say racist or sexist words. This method of combatting budding racism or sexism in the minds of little children enabled me to conclude that events or instances during which young children utter racist and sexist words can be used as a centre of interest to enrich inclusiveness in the curriculum of the ECECS.

Finally, the Ethiopian parents' narratives indicate that in many ways the mass media in North America shows only the negative aspects of Africa. So they believe that there is a need to teach the positive aspects of Africa to their children and other children by including them in the school curriculum at every level.
8. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

8.1. CONCLUSION

When I thought about my thesis journey, I began with a question: “What is it that I wanted to write about and why?” Similarly, when I come to the end of the journey, I end with the question: did I accomplish the purpose that I stated for undertaking this study? I believe I did. At this point, I think it is necessary to reiterate the major purpose of the thesis: to explore the experiences of children of first generation Ethiopian immigrant parents in their homes and in their ECES in order to search for ideas, theories, concepts, themes and processes that could contribute to the curriculum and teaching/learning process in ECES in general and in ECES with culturally, linguistically and racially diverse children in particular. To realize this purpose, some aspects of the past, the present and the future/perceived experiences of children of first generation Ethiopian immigrant parents were explored in their homes and in their ECES, mainly, through the perspectives of their parents, teachers and my own observations. To be more specific, the experiences of six children of first generation Ethiopian immigrant parents were explored by interviewing their twelve parents, their six teachers, themselves and by conducting observations in their homes and in their ECES. The exploration on the experiences of these children focused in two major places, their homes and their ECES at five different points in times: in their homes before the children started attending ECES (pre-early childhood education settings experiences); in ECES during their transition from home to ECES (transitional experiences); in the ECES during their adjustment (adjustment experiences); in their homes after they adjusted in the ECES and in their ECES after they
had adjusted there (post adjustment experiences at ECES). During the analysis of the
data, numerous ideas, themes, unexpected surprises and processes emerged. The
concluding section of the present chapter identifies those ideas, theories and processes
that I believe worth identifying and I have highlighted each of them as follows:

8.1.1. THE INTERCONNECTEDNESS OF THE CHILDREN'S
EXPERIENCES WITH THE EXPERIENCES
OF THEIR PARENTS

This study shows that, in many ways, the experiences of children of first generation
Ethiopian immigrant parents are interconnected not only with their parents' experiences
in their country of origin, Ethiopia, and in their new country, Canada, but also with the
identity of their parents, as Ethiopians, with a set of culture, language, beliefs, religions
and history. Furthermore, the parents' experiences as refugees in neighboring countries
before coming to Canada have also played a role in the experiences of the children. For
example, the parents believed that, among other things, their experiences as refugees
before coming to Canada, the lack of an extended family here in Canada and the resultant
loneliness they felt created a strong desire to have children which, in turn, became a
motivating force to promote positive experiences within their capacities as first
generation Ethiopian immigrant parents. The study shows that all the six children in this
study were wanted, loved, cared for and socialized to the full capacity of their first
generation Ethiopian immigrant parents. Certainly, a strong desire to have children is a
source of energy and attention that promotes positive experiences in children (Collahas,
1974) Parents' strong desire to have children which is partly the result of their
experiences as refugees, plays a role in what they did and do for their children; however,
the parents also voiced the limitations that the absence of extended family here in Canada has brought to their child-rearing practices. They argued strongly that if their extended families were in Toronto, their child-rearing practices would have been much easier as they would have gained their families' support. The parents also believed that if they had extended family here, revitalizing their cultures and promoting home language would have been easier. This shows how the children's experience is interconnected with their parents' experiences as refugees. Furthermore, the children’s early exposure to the Ethiopian way of circumcision, christening, feeding, sleeping patterns and home languages illustrates how their experiences are connected to their parents’s cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds from their country of origin, Ethiopia.

8.1.2. THE TRANSITION FROM HOME TO ECES

This study shows that almost all the children of first generation Ethiopian immigrant parents in the study experienced a period of intense uneasiness, that is, crying, screaming and being in state of distress during their transition from home to ECES. Although there could many other factors such as ethnic background, class, race and gender, according the data in this study, two major reasons are attributed to their intense uneasiness or intense difficulties. The first one is like any other children, they face the problem of “separation anxiety” (Ainsworth, Bleher, Waters, & Wall, 1978; Bowlby, 1970). The other reason is the fact that their linguistic and cultural background are different from the culture and the language of the ECES. These dual problems made their transition from home to ECES very uneasy and long-lasting as compared to children whose home languages and cultures are similar with the language and the culture of the ECES, ‘native’ children. As
discussed in Chapter Five, before their transition from home to ECES, the language spoken to them, the lullabies sung to them, the way they were soothed to sleep, the rhymes sung to them, the games played with them, the food they ate and the style of interactions they had with their parents were related to Ethiopian cultures. The study shows that since they came across language, food, pattern of sleep, styles of interactions and communication with which they were unfamiliar, they felt more uncomfortable or disconnected in the ECES as compared to the 'native' children; however, the study does not suggest that these children should not be familiar with their home languages and cultures. In fact, children who start with their home languages have a base, confidence and skills that facilitate learning a second language (Cummins, 1979, 1985, 1986, 1996; Dotsch, 1992; Garcia, 1997; Jong, 1977; King & Chipman, 1994; Mock, 1986; Siren, 1991) Rather, it is to suggest the need for more sensitivity and techniques on the part of teachers and parents in dealing with the intense uneasiness that such children face during their transition from home to ECES, even though it is a temporary stage.

8. 1. 3. FEELINGS OF GUILT AND FRUSTRATION

During the transitional period, when 'baitawar' children's discomfort and distress were extremely intense and lasted long, the parents felt guilty because they thought that they did not prepare their children for ECES. Some teachers also experienced a sense of failure when they felt that they were unable to stop the children from crying and being distress for quite a while.
8.1.4. THREE GROUPS OF ‘BAITAWAR’ CHILDREN

One of the surprises of this study that I came across during the analysis of the narratives of the teachers and the parents is the notion of identifying three groups of ‘baitawar’ children on the basis of their transition from homes to ECECS. The first group includes those children whom I referred to as “Early Detectors”, children who start crying and screaming the moment they enter the classrooms and continue doing so for quite a long time. In my understanding, these children not only seriously protest their separation from their parents but also easily detect the unfamiliarity of the language and other human and non-human phenomena in the classroom situations. The second group of children are those children to whom I referred as “Late Detectors”. These children start playing and interacting with the classroom situations the moment they enter the classrooms without any inhibition. They play easily and get excited with the play materials. They try to talk in their own languages with other children and teachers even to the extent of trying to tell stories in their own language. But after a certain period of time, usually after two or three days, they start pausing and listening to what others are saying and doing. Their excitement and speech in their home language start to diminish. Their happy little faces change into unhappy little faces. Soon they burst into tears and start crying non-stop for many days, sometimes even for weeks. The third group includes those children who for some reasons or other do not cry or get distressed. Even if they do, it is for a short period of time and then they easily start mixing and playing with other children and teachers. I referred to this group of children as “Easygoing Children”.
8. 1. 5. ACTIVITIES IN SLOW MOTION AND CALMNESS

One of the issues that this study emphasizes is the techniques of helping ‘baitawar’ children adjust to classroom situations. As discussed in Chapter Six, Section 6.2.3, the teachers in this study pointed out what worked and what did not work for them in terms of these techniques. The techniques that did not work included, hugging, touching, picking the children up, talking in language that they do not understand, soothing them in ways that are unfamiliar to them and singing songs that they were not used to. Among the techniques that worked better were: encouraging parents to stay in the classrooms until the children settle, using a lot of pictures and visualization, uttering few words in the mother tongue of the children, soothing them in ways that the children are used to be soothed, singing songs that they are familiar with and uttering a few English words that the children already know. As discussed in Chapter Six, Section 6.2.3, from my experience, one of the most effective techniques of dealing with the intense uneasiness of ‘baitawar’ children is teachers’ engagement in slow motion activities in areas where the ‘baitawar’ child could see or, at least, could have a glimpse. These activities include such things as rolling a small ball on the floor, hugging dolls, pouring water from one jug to another and drawing or painting pictures on a large paper placed on the floor. When crying and distressed children see such activities performed in a calm atmosphere and in slow motion, they are attracted toward them and pause to watch. Oftentimes, they stop crying to the extent of showing smiling faces and at times even burst into laughter. I told this experience of mine to one of the teachers, Teacher Diane. She told me that she had similar observation. Although this technique is not mentioned by the other five teachers, I believe that it is a technique that is worth consideration for further research.
8.1.6. STEPPING INTO THE WORLD OF LEARNING A NEW LANGUAGE

As discussed in Chapter Six, Section 6.3.3, this study concludes that when young children of first generation immigrant parents learn second language in ECES, they step to or go through various phases. The first phase is what I referred as the “Phase of Talking in One’s Own Home Language”. This is the phase during which the children keep on talking in their own home language as though others understand what they say. The second phase is what I referred as the “Phase of Uttering Strange Words”. This is the phase during which the children utter strange words, which are understandable neither to the teachers nor to the parents. The third phase is what I referred as the “Phase of Using Few Words/Phrases”. During this time the children usually pick one or two words or phrases from the language of the ECES, and use them for almost everything they want to say. The fourth phase is what I referred as the “Phase of Assigning the Right Words/Phrases to the Right Things/Ideas”. During this time the children are able to point out things or ideas by using a few English words or phrases. The final phase is the period during which the children are able to communicate in simple words, phrases and sentences that are understandable to the teachers and to other children. Although the children have passed through different phases, to the wonder of their parents and teachers, it did not take them much time to understand and speak English.

8.1.7. CHILDREN AS AGENTS OF RESISTANCE

The analysis in Chapter Seven, Section 7.2.1, showed that as the result of their experiences in the ECES, the children in this study brought changes in the language of
communication at home, in their likes and dislikes of food and in the types of nursery
rhymes that they wanted to sing with their parents. Although the parents were very happy
to see their children coping with the language and cultures of their new country, Canada,
they also wanted to preserve the cultures and the languages from their old country,
Ethiopia. So there was some kind of battle between the parents and the children related
with the changes in the home environments. From the narratives of the parents and my
own observation in the home settings, the major point of the battle was the issue of the
home language: parents wanted their children to speak in the home language and children
preferred to speak in English. The children resisted. In other words, the children became
agents of resistance as they resist to speak the home language. On the other hand, the
parents did not want to hurt the feelings of their children by pushing them to do things
that they were not interested in. Most of the time, they had to compromise with them in
such a way that while they spoke in Amharic, the children responded in English. That
means, although the children did not speak their home language to the expectation of
their parents, they still understood it; however, it is important to note that this whole
situation does not mean that the children are completely disconnected from their home
culture and language. As children of first generation Ethiopian immigrant parents, they
still live in homes where they are exposed to the language and the cultures of their
country of origin, Ethiopia. For example, as explained in Chapter Seven, Section 7.2.2,
they see their parents behaving in the Ethiopian way; they hear Ethiopian stories; they
play Ethiopian game; they see historical and cultural artifacts; and they attend Ethiopian
social gathering. These are some of the things which make their home experiences
different from the home experiences of other children born from other cultural groups.
8. 1. 8. CHILDREN AS BRIDGES

As discussed in Chapter Seven, Section 7.3.1, the children's activities at home were reflected in their activities in the ECECS and vice versa (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). For example, the stories that they heard and the role-play that they played at home were reflected in their stories and their role-plays in the ECECS. Similarly, what they heard and what they did in their ECECS were reflected in what they say and do in their home environments. On the base of such observation, this thesis elicits the notion that "children are like a bridge who connect their homes and ECECS" by using their experiences in these two settings.

8. 1. 9. CHILDREN AS CURRICULUM CO-DEVELOPERS

Part of a classroom curriculum has a lot to do with students' experiences that they bring to the classroom (Brubaker, 1982; Cummins, 1996; Pike & Selby, 1995, 1988, 1999a, 1999b). Little children of early childhood age also bring their experiences to ECECS. As analyzed in Chapter Seven, Section 7.4 and Section 7.4.1, the narratives of both the parents and the teachers and my observation in the classroom settings showed that the children in this study brought their experiences to the classrooms. This act of bringing experiences to the classroom settings adds to the content of the classroom curriculum. This, then, leads us to the notion that little children are also 'curriculum co-developers'.
8.1.10. CHILDREN AS MIRRORS AND TAPE RECORDERS

As discussed in Chapter Five, Section 5.5, for some parents, one of the criteria for choosing ECES was the racial mix of the children and the teachers. As they pointed out, this criterion emanated from the fear of some elements of racism in their children's perceived experiences. While discussing such and related issues with the parents and the teachers, the topic of racism emerged. Although the data did not show that the six children in this study experienced elements of racism, some of the parents and almost all the teachers gave numerous examples related to the experiences of other children that indicated how very young children in ECES or other places uttered racist and sexist words/phrases. As the analysis in Chapter Seven, Section 7.4.1.1 show such words/phrases did not emanate from the children themselves, but were reflections of words/phrases that were voiced in their surroundings. This, then, leads us to the notion that young children are like mirrors and tape recorders who reflect or record voices that they hear around them suggesting that we need to mind what we say and do in their presence. In other words, children of early childhood age, reflect and play back what they see and hear from people around them as though they are like mirrors and tape recorders.

8.1.11. HOME LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL REVITALIZATION

This study shows that the Ethiopian parents want to revitalize their home language and culture through their children. Along with the English language, they want their children to speak, read and write in their home language. But the parents also said that they faced problems in terms of a lack of appropriate materials and the knowledge to effectively enable their children to speak, read and write in their home language. Although the
teachers believe in the importance of maintaining home language, they did not think that it was their duty to deal with home languages.

8.2. IMPLICATIONS

8.2.1. The finding that the experiences of children of first generation Ethiopian immigrant parents are intertwined with who their parents are as Ethiopians with culture, language, religions, races, histories and political encounters which caused their exodus from Ethiopia coupled with their experiences here in Canada, adds to the understanding of the theory that children's experiences are influenced both by “remote and immediate contextual factors” (Bernhard, 1995; Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986; Dei, 1993, 1994, 1996; Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; Gibson & Ogbu, 1991; Hutchison, 1998; Morgolin, 1974; Nsamenang, 1992; Pike & Selby, 1988, 1999a, 1999b; Spodek & Saracho, 1991, 1996; Super & Harkness, 1986;). In other words, this finding not only strengthens the theory which stresses the importance of looking at children's development in contexts, but also illustrates how children's experiences are intertwined with remote and immediate contexts. As discussed in Chapter Three Section, 3.6.5, immediate contexts are those contexts directly related with the day-to-day experiences of children. They include such things as the home, the ECES, the neighbourhoods, the people, the animals and the plants with which the children interact. Remote contexts include such things as past events, politics, government policies, parental employment and natural and human-made situations of the world at large. Although children do not directly interact with these remote contexts, they are indirectly influenced by them. For example, the political events that happened in Ethiopia has influenced the experiences of the children in this study as it
has impacted the attitudes and the beliefs of their parents and, in turn, their child-rearing practices here in Canada.

8.2.2. When the 'baitawar' children faced intense uneasiness during their transition from home to ECES, both the parents and the teachers felt guilty and got frustrated although the extent and the depth of their frustration and guilt might differ. The parents felt guilty and frustrated because they associated their children's transitional difficulties with their own failure to prepare them for leaving their home setting. In other words, as they did not anticipate the kind of experiences that their children would face during their transition from home to ECES, they did not find it easy to deal with their children. Some of the teachers also experienced a sense of failure and guilt because they thought that they were not prepared well enough to deal with the children's transitional experiences.

While quite a lot of literature discuss the importance of teachers' knowledge in dealing with children of diversity in ECES (for example, Bernhard, 1995; Bernhard, Lefebvre, Chud & Lange, 1995; Corson, 1998; Dotsch, 1992), I did not come across literature that discuss how first generation immigrant parents can deal with their children's transitional experiences from home to ECES. Although I am not at all claiming this study to be the first to raise and discuss this issue, the fact that I did not come across such literature may suggest that less attention might have been given to the issue of preparing first generation immigrant parents in dealing with their children's transition from home to ECES. The question, then, is how can we prepare first generation immigrant parents to deal with their children's transition from home to ECES?

The first recommendation has to do with orienting first generation immigrant parents
on how to prepare their children for ECES. Such orientation can be arranged by various cultural group communities in Toronto in cooperation with the Parenting Program of the Toronto Board of Education. For example, the orientations for the Ethiopian first generation immigrant parents may be occasionally arranged by the Ethiopian Association in Toronto, located at 2057 Danforth Avenue, in cooperation with the Parenting Programs of the Toronto Board of Education or other concerned organizations and individuals. The topics of the orientations may include both the techniques of preparing ‘baitawar’ children for ECES before their entry (pre-transitional preparation) and the techniques of easing their transitional experiences after they enter the ECES. Furthermore, if it is not already there, I strongly suggest that a course that emphasizes the issue of dealing with the transition of ‘baitawar’ from home to ECES should be part of the training package of the Parenting Program in the Toronto Board of Education. Again, if it does not already exist, we may also need to prepare guides which help first generation immigrant parents how to prepare their children for ECES (pre-transitional preparation) and how to deal with them during their transitional experiences. Such a guide might help the parents to avoid the shock, frustration and feeling of guilt when they see their children’s intense uneasiness during their transition from home to ECES. It might include information on the nature of ‘baitawar’ children’s transition from home to ECES; it might include the kind of preparation that parents should do before they bring their children to ECES (pre-transitional preparation) and it might include the type of help that they could provide to teachers in case their children pass through uneasiness during their transition.

The second recommendation is the need for more emphasis on dealing with ‘baitawar’ children’s transition from home to ECES in the curriculum of early childhood education
teachers' training programs. It is true that the issue of children's adjustment in ECES is usually included in the training of early childhood education teachers programs; however, I suggest that early childhood education teachers need more preparation not only through pre-service and in-service training programs, but also through short orientations such as workshops and discussions. Teachers also may need more encouragement to reflect on the experiences of 'baitawar' children during their transition from home to ECES and on the issue of cultural sensitivity so that they can conceptualize both the theory and practice of dealing with such children. Furthermore, early childhood education teachers' guides might give more emphasis on the issue of dealing with children's transition from home to ECES in general and the transition of 'baitawar' children in particular.

8.2.3. This study has identified three groups of 'baitawar' (early detector children, late detector children, easy going children) on the basis of their transitional experiences from home to ECES: These differences may be attributed to the children's experiences before they start coming to ECES in terms of the way they are reared in the home environment. It may also be linked to the "nature of their learning styles", that is some children detect things instantly while others do not (Pike & Selby, 1988); however, further research is needed to examine how and why 'baitawar' children act and behave differently during their transition from home to ECES for a more in-depth understanding of the issue.

8.2.4. The study shows that when children of early childhood age try to learn the language of the ECES, they go through various phases: talking in their home language, uttering strange words, using few words or phrases for everything they want to say, assigning the right words/phrases to the right things/ideas and communicating in simple
sentences. As indicated in Chapter Three, Section 3.5, Dotsch and her colleague, Fung undertook a study on the cultural and the linguistic adaptation of newcomer preschool children in Toronto. One of their conclusions was that when newcomer preschool children acquire a second language, “they pass through five stages of receptive language acquisition (such as learning to hear and understanding vocabulary) and ten stages of expressive language acquisition” (Dotsch, 1992, p. 25) such as such repeating words and imitating tones). So this particular conclusion strengthens some of Dotsch’s and Fung’s observations on the issue of second-language learning in ECES.

8.2.5. The study shows that children of first generation immigrant parents become agents of change in their home environments as the result of their experiences in ECES; however, as indicated in Chapter Seven, Section 7.2.1 and Chapter Eight, Section 8.1.7, there are times when the parents do not find it easy to deal with some of the changes that their children bring into the home. For many of the parents, the issue of dealing with the change in the communication pattern at home was both a challenge and a struggle. There is a power struggle that goes on between the children and the parents when children act as agents of resistance as the result of their experiences in ECES. This suggests that first generation immigrant parents may need to have orientation on how to deal with their children during their readjustment period in the home environment. In other words, it is not only about how to deal with the transitional experiences of their children that first generation immigrant parents need to be oriented and get some guidance, but it is also on how to deal with their children during their readjustment to the home environments. So orientation programs that can be organized by cultural communities like the Ethiopian Association in Toronto or other concerned organization
may need to embrace this issue when orienting first generation immigrant parents. We may also need to research in greater depth the post adjustment experiences of children of first generation immigrants in their home environments as the result of their experiences in ECES.

8.2.6. The study shows that the experiences of children of first generation Ethiopian immigrant parents at home and at ECECS are interconnected. As a person who has worked in ECES for a long time, I also observed that this notion of the “interconnectedness of children’s experiences at home and at ECECS” also applies to the experiences of other children; however, it has a special significance when it comes to the experiences of children of first generation immigrant parents: it helps us to understand their transitional experiences from home to ECES; it helps us to understand the role they could play as a source of inclusive curriculum or the role they could play as inclusive curriculum co-developers and it helps us to understand how the experiences of such children could connect the home and the ECECS like a bridge thereby enabling teachers and parents to learn from each other. From this point of view, it is important that teachers and other early childhood educators understand and recognize this notion of “interconnectedness of children’s experiences at home and at ECECS” in order to promote inclusiveness in curriculum and to facilitate an effective teaching/learning process. Therefore, I suggest that a topic entitled as “interconnectedness of children’s experiences at home and at ECECS” be included in teachers’ training or orientations programs. The idea can be developed and expanded through further qualitative research.

8.2.7. The fact that children of early childhood age say some racist words or phrases in ECES or other places calls for different intervention actions that may help to
stop, what is termed as "budding racism". As indicated earlier, the racist words that little children voice do not originate from them. Rather they are seeds scattered by some adults in their surroundings and easily picked up by them (Derman-Sparks, 1993/94). If left unnoticed or ignored, the children may grow up with racist attitudes. Not only should we be aware of the elements of racism around little children that may contaminate their attitudes and eventually hurt them and their relationships with others, but also we need to develop ways of stopping their growth. As discussed in Chapter Seven, Section. 7. 4. 1, this particular study has come up with a theme, "combatting budding racism" in children's mind, which I believe will resonate in the minds of people interested in the issue. The idea behind "combatting budding racism" is that anytime children in the ECES utter words/phrases related to racism or sexism, these particular words or phrases would be included in the topics of the day or if necessary in the topics of the week to be discussed and talked about based on the level of the children's understanding so that they may realize that people of all colors and sexes should respect and love each other. I suggest that this similar notion of "combatting budding racism" can be applied in the home environments as well. Not only should parents and other family members be careful in what they say and tell to their little children at home, but also anytime the children utter racist or sexist words, they, the parents, should be alert to talk about that particular word or phrase, inculcating in the minds of their children that all people of color and sexes should respect and love each other. Parents need to realize that the development of racist attitudes in their children's minds not only hurt other children, but also affect their own healthy development. In fact, a lot of literature of early childhood education emphasizes that early childhood education teachers should be prepared for
diversity. I suggest that the preparation of parents for diversity also should be emphasized so that they could also be prepared for diversity. If they are prepared to accept diversity, they can, in turn, prepare their children for diversity. I strongly suggest that the theme of “combatting budding racism in the mind of young children” not only needs to be included in the curriculum of early childhood teachers and supervisors’ training programs, but also should be included in the orientation package of parents as well. For example, during orientation sessions, parents can be encourage to act like children and parents and simulate the concept of the “combatting budding racism”.

Furthermore, we need to conduct more research that may help to develop different ways of combatting budding racism and sexism in the minds of little children at home, in ECES and in other places.

8.2.8. The Ethiopian parents in this study have an interest in maintaining/revitalizing their languages and cultures from their country of origin, Ethiopia, through their children. Almost all of them believe that, as first generation immigrant parents, if they do not work hard to familiarize their children with the language and the culture of their country of origin, their children and grandchildren may face an identity crisis in the future. So they try their best not only to familiarize their children with their home language but also to teach them about some elements of Ethiopian culture and history through artifacts, stories and plays. Particularly, their children’s ability to understand and speak the home language is of paramount importance; however, many of them fear that their children’s exposure to two languages at the same time will bring confusion and frustration. Since they are in a dilemma as to how to teach their language and culture, the parents lack consistency in speaking their home languages with
their children. As a result, their children are not able to speak their home languages up to their expectations. These parents are asking for support in terms of know how and materials. The quest of these parents requires the examination of the possible strategies that concerned organizations and individuals could use to provide them or other parents and children with similar backgrounds with direct or indirect supports that may help to maintain and revitalize their home languages and cultures.

As some parents indicated, the heritage language programs run by cultural group communities in Toronto was the type of program that their children would have attended; however, none of them attended such programs because until recently, the Ethiopian community organization in Toronto did not have a permanent programs of such a kind. Some of the parents also said that they were not sure how much the community based heritage language program accommodated the levels and the interest of early childhood age children. A future study is needed to examine the existing heritage language programs to come up with ideas that may help to improve policies and practices of maintaining home language for early childhood education age children. Furthermore, looking at the experiences of other countries in maintaining home language at early childhood education level may help to find alternative ways of maintaining home language. For example, as indicated in Chapter Three, Section 3.5, one of the forms of supporting home language development in Swedish ECES is assigning home language support teachers known as “itinerants” (transients) who travel from ECES to ECES and provide home language support to individuals or groups of children for a certain number of hours per week (Siren, 1991). England also has bilingual support teachers for minority children at early childhood education level (Wood, Boyle & Hubbard, 1999). As a way of
promoting Canadian multicultural policy, trying alternative techniques of maintaining home languages and cultures might be helpful.

All the teachers in this study believe in the usefulness of maintaining home language for children of immigrant families. But some of them indicated that they did not think that it was their responsibility to maintain the home language of children in their classrooms. This suggests that early childhood education teachers may need to be aware that they do have roles that they could play to promote home language. One of the roles is encouraging children of first generation immigrant families to speak their home languages at home with their families and other family members and at ECES with their friends who can also speak their home languages. Doing this not only help the children to speak their home language, but also promote their self-esteem.

The Ethiopian Association in Toronto which embraces many Ethiopian immigrant families, may need to play more roles in terms of maintaining and revitalizing the language and the cultures of Ethiopians in Toronto. In cooperation with Toronto Board of Education and other government and non-government organizations, the Association needs to establish an Ethiopian Educational and Cultural Resource Center (EECRC) where Ethiopian Canadian parents and their children can get technical and material supports that may help them to maintain their home languages and cultures. The Association also may need to form an Ethiopian Language and Culture Revitalizing Committee (ELCRC) to coordinate other Ethiopian religious and non-religious organizations so that they could cooperate in maintaining home languages and cultures. It should raise funds and collect books, videos, computer software, artifacts and other materials from Ethiopia and other places to build the resource center. It also needs to
support individuals who have the expertise and are interested in committing themselves
to promoting the home language and cultures of Ethiopia through various means such as art work, writing children's books and composing children's music. Moreover, it needs to seek money from government and non-government organizations to hire an early childhood educator who has knowledge of revitalizing home language and culture for children of immigrant parents. This early childhood educator may consult with parents and act as a liaison between parents and ECES and between the Ethiopian Association and ECES whenever necessary. S/he may also write children's books and prepare guides for parents. Bilingual children's books written in English and Ethiopian languages are of paramount importance to the parents and the children. Furthermore, this early childhood educator might organize educational workshops, seminars and other discussion groups for parents, youth, community members and other concerned representatives of organizations. Above all, s/he might conduct research on language learning both in Ethiopia and Canada to produce materials that may help parents not only in Toronto but also in the diaspora so that they could maintain their home languages and cultures.

8.2.9. Although the contributions of this thesis were mentioned here and there, I believe it is important to reiterate them before I come to the end of my thesis journey:

*To my knowledge, there is no study that looked at the experiences of children at home and at ECES at five different points in time: before they started attending ECES, during their transition from home to ECES, during their adjustment in the classrooms, during their post adjustment in the home environments and, during their post adjustment in the classroom. Therefore, this study’s conceptual framework of looking at the experiences of children at home and at ECES at five different points in
time offers an alternative approach which may contribute to future research not only in examining the experiences of children with similar backgrounds but also in examining the experiences of early childhood age children at home and at ECES in general. By using this conceptual framework, longitudinal study can be conducted to gain firsthand information through observing children from the time of their birth to their post-adjustment period in early childhood education settings.

* To my knowledge, this study is first in its type and nature to deal with the experiences of children of first generation Ethiopian immigrant parents in their homes and in their ECES. From this point of view, it may be useful not only to first generation Ethiopian immigrant parents in Toronto but also for first generation Ethiopian immigrant parents in the diaspora in case published in whole or in part.

*There is scarcity of literature on child-rearing practices in developing countries, particularly in Africa (Nsamenang, 1992; Trawick-Smith, 1997). So this thesis may contributes to the understanding of some aspects child-rearing practices in Ethiopia, an African country, for organizations and individuals interested in this issue.

*As a case study, the study looked at the experiences of only six children of first generation Ethiopian immigrant parents; however, the numerous notions, ideas, concepts, theories and process that emerged from the analysis and the discussions of the data not only may resonate in the minds readers but also they may be “useful and transferable” (Briescheke, 1992; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Merriam, 1988) in understanding of the experiences of other children with similar backgrounds there-by contributing to the education and care of such children at home and at ECES.
As Shougee (1999, p. 314) writes, "Every ending is a beginning". Although this last sentence means "rejoicing and thanking God" for the completing the thesis journey, it also means the beginning of pondering which of the numerous issues that arose in this study should I concentrate on for my future research.
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX: A
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS

1. Background Information:

1.1. Demographic information: name, age, language/s spoken at home, educational background, type of work, work experiences, present occupations, number, age and sex of children, length of stay in Canada.

1.2. Flight from Ethiopia (when, why, how, where)

1.3. Could you please describe your journey from Ethiopia to the neighbouring country?

1.4. Could you please describe your experiences as a refugee in the neighbouring country where you stayed until you came to Canada?

1.5. Coming to Canada (when, prospects, problems encountered if any)

1.6. Is there anything you want to tell me about your background in general?

2. Questions Related to the Early Experiences of the Children at Home (Pre-ECES Experiences):

1.1. Were you interested to have children? If so why?

1.2. How did you prepare yourself to receive your newborn baby?

1.3. How do you describe the early experiences of X (X being the name of the child) as related to Ethiopian culture?

1.4. Could you please describe your belief on breast-feeding?

1.5. How long did you breastfed X? Why?

1.6. How do you describe the early sleeping pattern of X?

1.7. How do you describe the early language experiences of X?
1.8. Could you please describe your criteria for choosing the ECES for X?

1.9. Is there any thing you would like to tell me about the early experiences of X?

3. **Questions Related to Children’s Experiences During Their Transitions from Home to ECES (Transitional Experiences):**

3.1. Did you prepare X for ECES? If so how?

3.2. How do you describe X’s first day experiences at the ECES?

3.3. How do you describe X’s transitional experiences from home to ECES?

3.4. How did you try to help X adjust in the ECES?

3.5. How long did it take for X to adjust in the ECES?

3.6. How do you describe your own feelings during X’s transition from home to ECES?

4. **Questions Related to Children’s Experiences at Home after they adjusted or got used to the ECES situations:**

4.1. How do you describe the experiences of X at home after she/he got adjusted in the ECES?

4.2. Did you observe changes in X after she/he got used to the ECES? If so what kind of changes did you observe?

4.3. Are you interested to see your X speak your mother tongue/home language? If so how much are you interested and why?

4.4. How do you try to help your child speak the home language?

4.5. What are the values that you want most for your child and why?

4.6. What Canadian values do you want most for your child? Why?

4.7. What Ethiopian values do you want most for your child? Why?
4. 8. Could you please describe what and how you teach your child at home?

4. 9. What is X’s favourite activities at home?

4. 10. Does X like her/his ECES?

4. 11. Do you believe that X is well-adjusted in his ECES? If so how do you describe her/his situation in the ECECS?

4. 12. Do you participate in the care and education of your child at ECES? If so how much do you participate? If not why not?

4. 13. What do you want your child to learn in the ECES?

4. 14. Do have anything else to tell me about X’s experiences at home after she/he adjusted in the ECES?
APPENDIX: B
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS

1. Background Information:

1.1. Demographic Information: name, age, mother tongue and other language spoken, educational background, work experiences, number and age of children, number of years taught in ECES, number of years taught in the present ECES.

2. Questions Related to the Children's Experiences During Their Transition from Home to ECES:

2.1. Were you with X (X being the name of the child in the study) when she/he first came to the ECECS?

2.2. If you recall X's first day in the ECECS, how do you describe it?

2.3. How do you describe X's transitional experiences from home to ECECS?

2.4. Do you recall how long X took to get used to your classroom situations?

2.5. How do you describe the transitional experiences of children from home to ECES in general?

2.6. What is your understanding of cultural and linguistic diversity in ECES?

2.7. What principles do you have with regard to the caring and teaching of children from diverse cultures and languages?

2.9. Could you please describe the techniques you use to ease the home/ECES transition of children of diverse cultures and language?
3. Questions Related to the Adjustment and the Post-adjustment Experiences:

3.1. How do you describe the adjustment experiences of X?

3.2. Do you think X is well adjusted in your classroom? If so how do you describe her/his present behaviours?

3.3. Do you recall any particular instance where X had difficulty adjusting? If so what was it and why do you think she/he had that particular difficulty?

3.4. Do you recall how X get used to the language of the ECES, English?

3.5. How do you describe a second language learning by children in ECECS?

3.6. What are X’s favourite activities?

3.7. How do you describe a good physical set up of a classroom?

3.8. What do you consider when you think of educational and play materials in ECECS with children of different cultural and linguistic background?

3.9. How do you understand multicultural educational in ECES?

3.10. How do you understand inclusive curriculum in ECECS?

3.11. How do you promote inclusiveness in your classroom curriculum?

3.12. What do you think of the relationship of children’s experiences at home and at ECECS?

3.13. Do you believe that children of diverse language and cultures need to retain their home language? Is so what do you think is your contribution as a teacher in helping children maintain their home languages?

3.14. How is the involvement of parents in the affairs of the ECES in general and in your classroom in particular?

3.15. Do you have anything more to tell me?
APPENDIX: C
HOME OBSERVATION GUIDE

* The physical set up of the home in terms the child’s play space;

* Educational and play materials;

* Materials for promoting Ethiopian cultural heritage;

* Books that parents read to their child/children;

* Stories that parents tell to their children;

* Games that parents play with their child/children;

* The child’s interaction with the family members: mother, father and siblings;

* Communication pattern: the language/languages the child and the parents use at home:

* Types of activities that the child prefers;

* The child’s food preferences;

* Types of activities that parents prefer for their child/children;

* Parents’ expectations of the child’s behavior;

* Activities encouraged at home to promote early literacy;
APPENDIX: D
ECECS OBSERVATION GUIDE

* The physical set up of the classroom in terms of space and material arrangement;

* Educational/play materials;

* Types of activities children do;

* Daily programs;

* Interaction of the participant child with the teachers and other children;

* Activities the participant child mostly does;

* The participant child’s comfortability in what s/he does;
APPENDIX: E
LETTER FOR TEACHERS

Date

Dear Teacher,

I am a doctoral student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto. Presently, I am conducting a thesis study as a partial fulfilment of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the University of Toronto. My thesis topic is about the experiences of children of first generation Ethiopian immigrant parents in early childhood education and home settings in Toronto. I would highly appreciate it if you could be one of the early childhood education teachers that I would like to include in this study.

My intent is to learn from you and your early childhood education classroom settings about how children with diverse culture and language adapt and learn with particular emphasis on children of Ethiopian origin. I expect to observe activities of the children in your classroom. I would also like to ask you/interview you about the theoretical and practical knowledge you use to help children of diverse languages and cultures adjust and learn in your classroom. In other words, the purpose of asking/interviewing you is to learn from your past and present experiences/perspectives about the experiences of children of diversity in general and children of Ethiopian origin in particular and not to judge and evaluate you in any way.

The interview will be conducted at your convenience as to time and place. With your permission, the interviews will be taped and transcribed. However, you are free to stop me from recording at any time during the interview. Furthermore, the transcribed interview text will be returned to you for correction, in case you want to do so. You are also free to withdraw from participating in the study at any time. All the information you will be providing and your identity will kept confidential. Nobody, except me and my thesis supervisor, will have access to the tapes and the transcripts. They will be kept in locked file. Also in the final analysis of the study, pseudonyms will be used to protect yours, the children's and your organization's anonymity.

If you agree to participate in the study, please read and sign the attached consent form. If you need more information please contact me at (416) 652-8644.

I forward my sincere thanks to you for considering my request.

Sincerely yours

Bizunesh Wubie
Dear Parent,

I am an Ethiopian and a doctoral student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto. Presently, I am conducting a thesis study as a partial fulfilment of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the University of Toronto. My thesis topic is about the experiences of children of first generation Ethiopian immigrant parents in early childhood education and home settings in Toronto. I would highly appreciate it if you could be one of the parents that I would like to include in my study.

My intent is to learn from you about your child’s education and other experiences in your home and in the early childhood education setting that she/he is attending by interviewing or asking you. I would also like to observe your child in your home and in the early childhood education setting.

With your permission, the interview will be taped and transcribed. However, you are free to stop me from recording at any time during the interviews. Furthermore, the transcribed interview text will be returned to you for correction, in case you want to correct it. You are also free to withdraw from participating in the study at any time. All the information you will be providing and your identity will be kept confidential. Nobody, except me and my thesis supervisor, will have access to the tapes and the transcripts. They will be kept in locked files. Also, in the final analysis of the study, pseudonyms will be used to protect yours and your child’s anonymity.

If you agree to participate in the study, please read and sign the attached consent form. If you need more information please contact me at (416) 652-8644.

I forward my sincere thanks to you for considering my request.

Sincerely yours

Bizunesh wubie.
APPENDIX: G
STATEMENTS OF INFORMED CONSENT
FORMS FOR TEACHERS

I__________________________, a teacher in__________________________ day care
have read the letter from Bizunesh Wubie about her doctoral thesis study on the
experiences of children of Ethiopian immigrant parents aimed at contributing to
improving the education and care of children with diverse cultures and languages in early
childhood settings.

I am fully informed of the purpose, the procedure and other details of the study from the
attached letter and I have agreed to participate in the study.

Name__________________________ Signature__________________________

Date__________________________
APPENDIX: H
STATEMENTS OF INFORMED CONSENT
FORMS FOR PARENTS

I______________________, a parent, on behalf of myself and my minor child, have read the letter from Bizunesh Wubie about her doctoral thesis study on the experiences of children of Ethiopian immigrant parents at home and in early childhood settings aimed at contributing to improving the education and care of children with diverse cultures and languages.

I am fully informed of the purpose, the procedure and other details of the study from the attached letter and I have agreed to participate in the study.

Name______________________ Signature____________________

Date______________________