

Text and Worksheet: Primary Source: Interview with the Ly Family

In 1997, Joseph Hieu wrote his master's thesis entitled "A Study of Parental Interviews on Bilingual Programs for Vietnamese Students." In it, he interviewed several Vietnamese families. The following are excerpts from those interview transcripts.

Background information at the time of the interview :

- **Interviewee:** Mr. Anh Ly (age 55) and makes \$40,000 per year. Ly is Vietnamese but was born in Hong Kong and moved back to Vietnam with his parents at the age of nine. His highest level of education is college, which he attended in Vietnam. In Vietnam, he was an importer and exporter of goods, trading between Hong Kong and Vietnam. Due to the nature of his work, he was fluent in English.
- **Time of immigration:** The Lys immigrated during the first wave, leaving Vietnam by boat on April 30, 1975. They arrived in Chicago in 1979.
- **Family Background:** The Ly household consists of Ly, Chau Ly (his wife), and their son Hai. Hai was two years old when the Lys arrived in the United States. and is a twelfth grade bilingual student in a Chicago public secondary school. He has always been in bilingual programs because his parents want him to learn Asian culture and because he has Asian friends. But his parents also maintain that he must learn English as well as possible. Hai found high school difficult at first but worked hard and got good grades. The family is well-to-do and owns a two-story home in the Rogers Park neighborhood of Chicago.
- **Place of Interview:** The place of interview is not listed.

OBSERVE Identify and note details. What seems important to you? What seems interesting to you?	READ THE TEXT Interview with the Ly Family	QUESTION What do you wonder about? What confuses you? What do you want to further investigate?
	<p>INTERVIEWER: Why did you decide to leave your country?</p> <p>LY: As you may already know, communism is the enemy of capitalism. I am an importer and exporter, which means I am a capitalist. I always knew the Communists never accepted me. So my wife, my children, and I decided to leave Vietnam by boat.</p> <p>INTERVIEWER: When did you leave Vietnam?</p> <p>LY: We left Saigon on April 30, 1975, on a small boat. It still remains the saddest day of my life. As you know, thousands of South Vietnamese fled their homeland that day. We call it the darkest day in the history of Vietnam.</p> <p>INTERVIEWER: Did your trip go smoothly?</p>	

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LY: Oh, my God! It was terrible. I thought my whole family had disappeared at sea that day.

INTERVIEWER: Why?

LY: As our boat drifted into the sea, we did not know where we were going. Our boat was too small to deal with the dangers of rough seas and storms. We had to rush to shore the first chance we got. Our boat had no captain, but thank God it reached a small island. The island was so small that it had no name on our map. We stayed there, waiting for the winds to calm down and for someone to rescue us. Seven days later, a U.S. naval ship saw us and we were luckily rescued by them and brought to Guam Island along with other Vietnamese refugees.

INTERVIEWER: Having been here for some years, what are your impressions of the United States?

LY: We live in Chicago, but we still miss our country. What we like most here are freedom and opportunities. What we do not like here is that it is extremely difficult for parents to educate their children. In Vietnam, children listen to their parents with love and respect. Over here, parents have to listen to their children and fulfill their "demands." In our homeland, children are gifts from God. In this country children are often considered burdens!

INTERVIEWER: I understand that you have a child attending a bilingual program. What are your opinions of your child's education?

LY: We feel that Hai has received a good education in the United States. We do not have any view on the value of bilingual programs for learning English since my son did not need it for that. He overcame the language problem and is quite fluent in English now.

INTERVIEWER: So why did you enroll your son in a bilingual program?

LY: We are concerned with the cultural aspect of the program. We want our child exposed to Asian culture so he will continue to be a good son at home, a good student in school, and a good citizen in society.

INTERVIEWER: In other words, you believe that attending only regular classrooms would be problematic for your son?

LY: Yes and no. No, because my son speaks, reads, and writes English very well. Yes, because bilingual programs help my child in another way.

INTERVIEWER: May I know in what way?

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Name _____

Date _____

	<p>LY: Everyone knows that it is easy to learn bad things. Good things are difficult to practice. My wife and I do not want our son involved in drugs, gangs, and crime. Raising children here in Chicago is a hundred times more difficult than in Vietnam. In Vietnam, children obey their parents and teachers. In the U.S., parents and teachers have to cater to the kids.</p> <p>INTERVIEWER: You mean bilingual programs are able to safeguard your child from drugs, gangs, and crime?</p> <p>LY: Of course. Peer pressure, you know. My son listens to his friends. He rarely listens to me. So if we have our son in a class of all Asian children with Asian cultural backgrounds, he has the right kind of friends. Furthermore, our son's Vietnamese teachers and other Vietnamese parents talk to one another about their children's education, and we learn about our son's activities in school without pressuring him. In addition to retaining our cultural values, our family believes in going back to Asia to visit relatives from time to time. My son has retained his first language and is able to speak to our relatives in Vietnamese. He has also retained his good manners. That makes our life more meaningful, doesn't it?</p>	
REFLECT	<p>What more did you learn from reading this person's firsthand account? Why is this source important?</p>	

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