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HERITAGE LANGUAGE LEARNING AND SELF-IDENTITY

A Thesis in

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by

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ABSTRACT

Many immigrant families (most of whom are minorities) are concerned with the first language (L1) maintenance of their children living in a new country. Some of them still use their mother-language at home and go to the heritage language school weekly to learn heritage language (HL) and cultural traditions. Meanwhile, some of them lose their chance to learn or use their heritage language because of the low exposure of mother-language in the environment of majority language and culture. In this study, I aim to research factors that impact heritage language learning by analyzing interview data from four subjects, two American-born Chinese, one American-born Korean, and one Chinese-born ethnic Koreans, to understand the relationship between HL learning and self-identity. The goal of this study is to contribute to curriculum and pedagogy design for HL learning. The results show that parental and family involvement play a big role of HL language learning. School climates effect one's cultural identity as well. The qualitative analysis also indicates that one's HL language proficiency do not positively correlate to his/her cultural identity because of the intricate relationship between identity construction and HL learning.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

In the contemporary, globalized world, trends in immigration have made a large number of immigrants face the challenge of learning a new language and have created a second generation – children of immigrants – who are less aware of their heritage language due to the lack of heritage language maintenance in the new country. In this field of study, researchers have shown huge interest in heritage language as a language learning process concerned with learners' motivation, self-identity and other sociocultural factors. (J. Sook Lee, 2002; Agnes W. He, 2010; Norton, 2011)

When people talk about second language acquisition (SLA), we tend to think of the word 'bilingualism'. However, there are different types of bilingualism, including additive bilingualism (the maintenance of the home language while the second language is being learned) and subtractive bilingualism (the loss of one language on the way to learning another.). Regarding to the heritage language, there are also different definitions for it. The term has been used synonymously with community language, native language, and mother tongue to refer to a language other than English used by immigrants and their children. (Ange 2010, p. 66)

According to Wiley (2001), the labels and definitions that we apply to heritage language learners are important, because they help to shape the status of the learners and the languages they are learning. Deciding on what types of learners should be included under the heritage language label raises a number of issues related to identity and inclusion and exclusion. (p. 35)

Campbell and Peyton (1998) defined an HLL (Heritage Language Learner) in the United States context as someone whose first or native language is other than English, "either because they were born in another country or because their families speak a language other than English at

home” (p. 38). Xiao (2017) indicates that “scholars working with CHL learners often follow these traditions in defining their subjects, but tend to take an all-inclusive approach and prefer a broad definition of CHL learners.” (p. 78) He (2006), for instance, defines a Chinese heritage language (CHL) learner as someone “who is raised in a home where Chinese is spoken, who speaks or at least understands the language and is to some degree bilingual in Chinese and in English” (He 2006: 1).

Xiao (2017) “narrow approach to defining CHL learners, with language proficiency as the vital element, as all participants were students who were placed into a separate heritage curriculum through a language placement test”, which is to say their “definition of CHL learners went along the line of Polinsky and Kagan (2007), that CHL learners are individuals who have been raised in a Chinese (or partially Chinese) household, exposed to Mandarin or other forms of Chinese language in childhood, but did not acquire it to full capacity because another language usurped the original language.” (p. 79) Van Deusen-Scholl (2003), on the other hand, broadly defined bilingual HLLs, indicating that, “The most commonly agreed-on definition sees the heritage learner as bilingual in English and a home language other than English with varying degrees of proficiency in the home language.” He characterized HL learners as “a heterogeneous group ranging from fluent native speakers to non-speakers who may be generations removed, but who may feel culturally connected to a language” (p. 221).

In this study, my subjects are the HL learners who have some level of proficiency of their HL (from low to high) and who may feel culturally connected to their mother tongue languages. I explore the importance of interaction with community and family, especially with their parents, and the motivation of the HL learners such as 1) building or maintaining connections such as family or an imagined community in the original country; 2) being competitive on job market by knowing multiple languages; and 3) developing or maintain a sense of national belonging and/or identity.

Literature Review

The research methodology of SLA (Second Language Acquisition) has been divided into three kinds: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. Lantolf (1996), for example, decried the “the positivist legacy that continues to pervade SLA research” (714), at a time when postmodern and sociocultural approaches to language acquisition and use were being introduced to SLA but were also hotly contested by the (then) SLA mainstream. He argued that language learning, from a positivist perspective, tends to be described in logical, generally quantitative terms which aim to represent essentialist truths, often involving the isolation of variables affecting SLA (or language learner traits, such as age, gender, ethnicity, L1, SLA motivation, and proficiency level), which are manipulated and studied by an ostensibly unbiased scientific method. However, in usage-based approach of linguistic, researchers tend to pay attention to exemplar-based cognitive representation of language which built up through experience (Boas, 2013). “Language has a fundamentally social function. Processes of human interaction along with domain-general cognitive processes shape the structure and knowledge of language. (C Beckner, 2009) The structures of language emerge from interrelated patterns of experience, social interaction, and cognitive processes.

Triangulation, which is also highly used as a tool for researchers, usually entails bringing together multiple sources and types of data for analytical purposes (Denzin, 1970), including, potentially, multiple participants, researchers, time periods, and conceptual frameworks; interviews, observations, researcher and/or participant journals, archival or documentary data, assessments, and other information that is relevant (e.g., feedback from participants on transcripts or early drafts and interpretations, known as member checks) (Duff,2012c). Triangulation is a powerful technique that facilitates validation of data through

cross verification from two or more sources. In particular, it refers to the application and combination of several research methods in the study of the same phenomenon. (Bogdan, 2006)

Case study, as a research approach or strategy, has its origins in sociology, psychology, linguistics, and other subject areas that have informed theory, methodology, and practice in our field since its earliest days (Duff, 2008). Case study and thematic analysis are being used by researchers (E.g., Ying, 2016). Personal engagement in case study research leads to important reflections and insights on the part of researchers (and sometimes participants) about their respective roles in research as well as their biases, stances, histories, and understandings of a phenomenon like SLA and in their role in “producing” data of particular types (and not just collecting it) as well as interpreting it, all of which typically evolve over the course of research. Ethnographic research methods are also highly used by classroom-based researchers in HL schools, for example, in specific settings with heritage learning in different countries such as U.S., Canada, and Malaya. M Jeon (2008), for instance, uses “data collection methods include participant observation; informal conversations with the participants; in-depth interviews; and on-site document analysis. Through regular and sustained interaction with participants in the three research sites over a period of three years, the findings provide insights into ways in which the participants' attitudes toward language learning and maintenance are continuously shaped and revised based on their life circumstances.” For the time’s sake, I couldn’t have done an ethnographic research for my four subjects but I gathered their data by more than one method (heritage language learning autobiography and interview) into my case study, so that I have multiple resources to interpret their data for analytic purpose.

Many researchers and scholars stand on the sociocultural dimension when they conduct research on HL learners. Not only limited to American-Chinese HL learners, researchers who study other HL learners such as American-Japanese, American-Korean, or British-Chinese, also attend to social and cultural factors. In this study, I focus on two American-born Chinese, one

American-born Korean, and one Chinese-born ethnic Koreans, to understand the relationship between HL learning and self-identity.

Several researchers (Rachel R. Reynolds, Kathryn M. Howard, Julia Dea 'k, 2009) attest to the importance of interaction with community and family especially with parents, and HL learners' motivation (e.g. they want to be more involved to the Chinese community and are eager to understand what are people saying when they go back to China). Ming-Ying Li (2016) have found that her subjects "seemed to have the advantage of obtaining communicative competence over non-CHL learners because of early exposure to their HL and parental involvement in promoting their use of their HL, especially at home." Many researchers (e.g., Kondo, 1997; Oh 2003) also indicates that parents who explicitly display positive attitude toward HL have strong influence on children's attitudes as well as language use and proficiency. Several studies on Latino families and communities (e.g., Schecter & Bayley, 2003; Vasquez, Pease-Alvarez & Shannon, 1994) have concluded that when immigrant families display positive attitudes toward bilingualism and accord an important role to HL in the formation of cultural identity, their children tend to have a positive attitude to the HL and hence more motivation to learn the language. In contrast, when families afford a more important role to English in their making-it in the mainstream society and view the HL as a hindrance to their fast track to Americanization, their children show a consistent shift toward English.

At the same time, Xiao and Wong (2014) suggest that the rapidly increasing population of heritage students within the recent expansion of Chinese language education leads us to explore anxiety levels specific to Chinese heritage language (CHL) learners. Some Chinese-Americans are struggling with their self-identity being between in two cultural backgrounds because they don't feel safe of being minority in United State or couldn't get enough support of HL learning from their family. Yang Xiao (2014) uses the term, "ethnic identity and heritage language anxiety" to describe this feeling of struggle experienced by some Chinese-Americans

where has created a common phenomenon among Asian-Americans of “American-pride” and “Chinese-shame,” especially during their puberty. Low self-esteem, a self-perceived low level of ability, lack of group membership with peers, beliefs about language learning, competitiveness, unwillingness to communicate, and communication apprehension, too, could all be attributed to a learner’s anxiety (Bailey, 1983; Horwitz et al., 1986; Liu & Jackson, 2008; Oxford, 1992; Price, 1991; Young, 1990, 1994).

To examine participants’ identities through their multiple cultural background is always complex. For Asian-Americans, they even have multiple and shifting group/cultural identities while they are growing up in different contexts with different group of people. Research on HL learners has shown that minority-language students who maintain their own culture, literacy, and ethnic identity, in addition to enjoying pride in their heritage and close relations within their family and community social networks, will benefit from greater social mobility and personal empowerment, and will more likely succeed in mainstream school and society (e.g., Cho & Krashen, 1998; Krashen, Tse, & McQuillen, 1998; Kondo-Brown, 2002, 2003). Identity has become something of a buzzword, even a cliché, in applied linguistics and many other fields over the past decade. More and more people are in a position where they need to negotiate the different cultural identities that are derived from their own belonging to different cultural groups (Mahtani, 2002). Norton (1997) defines identity as “how people understand their relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how people understand their possibilities for the future”. Norton Peirce (1995) also notes how identity is neither fixed nor uncontested, and is therefore “multiple, a site of struggle, and subject to change”. In my study, I will analyze in Chapter 3 that how the changeable time, space and people around my subjects have influenced how they have identified themselves at various times and in various contexts.

Language has been noted as one of the most prominent factors in the competency of a culture since it is always used within a cultural environment, acts as a salient indicator of a

group's identity that is transmitted from generation to generation, and serves as the main tool to internalize culture (Fishman, 1977; Giles & Coupland, 1991). However, not all the researchers take that for granted. For example, Guitart (1981) proposes that the disassociation between ethnic loyalty and language loyalty is possible. He states it is not true that language shift is always a manifestation of ethnic self-rejection. In the United States, there are many individuals who identify themselves as members of an ethnic group whose cultural patterns are those of that group, but who have little or no proficiency in the ethnic mother tongue. More importantly, they have little or no motivation to speak that tongue. (1981: 31) Similarly, Hoffman (1991) states that proficiency in a language does not necessarily imply knowledge of the culture of the language and vice versa. In my study, the results from my analysis of subjects' data prove this statement as well. It will be explained with more details in Chapter 4.

Chapter 2

Data and Method

In this study, I gathered four subjects' data from their LLAs (Language learning autobiography) and conducted one participant interview with each. I qualitatively interpret the data by thematic analysis as my analytic tool.

Participants

There are four participants (each identified with pseudonyms) in my case study: two American-born Chinese (Bob and Emma), one American-born Korean (Alice), and one Chinese-born ethnic Korean (William). Also, as a Chinese-born ethnic Korean myself, I have a lot of experience of HL learning and thoughts about self-identity.

Research Questions

Four research questions are framed my research: 1) Why are my research subjects learning heritage language or what motivation factors impact their HL learning? 2) What are their heritage language learning histories (e.g. bilingual school, home-learning)? 3) How does heritage language learning impact subjects' self-identities as insiders and outsiders? 4) Is there a positive correlation between cultural identity and HL proficiency?

Data Collection

All of the four subjects were asked to write a LLA (Language learning autobiography) based on their personal HL learning history. First -person narratives of language learners have recently been given more attention for the rich information provided and intricacies of personal investment in language learning (see Norton 2000, Pavlenko and Lantolf 2000; Benson and Nunan 2002; Kinginger and Pavlenko 2002, among others). In their LLAs, I asked my participants to answer why they were learning the HL and what factors impact their learning; how heritage language learning impacts their self-identities; and what their experiences were of “walking” through two languages and cultural backgrounds. I also conducted an interview with each participant to discuss their deeper thoughts, for example regarding how they look upon the issue of “American pride” and “Asian shame” through their own experiences in terms of cultural power and conflict between “White Privilege” and “Asian Rising”. Asian Rising, I mean Asian countries and Asian culture are becoming more influential on the world stage. More importantly, I asked them about how their identities changed over the time and space of where they lived and who they are around. Last, I collected their thoughts of whether there is a significance correlation of HL proficiency and cultural identity.

In this study, I adopted thematic analysis as my tool to analyze the four subjects’ LLA and interviews. I determined the main themes by categorizing my data about: 1) the learners’ early exposure of HL including family involvement (e.g., parental and other family members’ connection to promote their HL learning); 2) learners’ motivation for HL learning (e.g., competitive in job market and obtain national belongings); 3) school climates that impacted HL learners’ multicultural identity (such as bicultural identity, HL anxiety in a certain time period), and 4) any relationship between cultural identity and HL proficiency.

Chapter 3

Analysis

Excerpts from the LLHs allow us to see degrees of identification or non-identification and investment with imagined communities. (Murphey et al, 2004) By analyzing the data from their LLA and interview, I found that there are common traits and differences among those Asian-American participants. All three are pretty good at the heritage language, which they attributed to family connection. For example, in Alice's LLA, she wrote that:

“My ‘grandmother’ on the other hand, only spoke Korean so I was forced to learn it, so I could communicate with her. My mother's side of the family and paternal grandparents were all in Korea, so it helped communication with them too.” – Alice

Emma and Bob both had education background in China so they've learned Chinese very well and 90% of the conversation in their families were in Chinese. William, who is ethnically Korea but grew up in China, learned Korean as his heritage language in China because all of his family members spoke Korean at home, especially his grandparents who didn't know Chinese at all. Besides the chance to speak HL with his family, he also mentioned an effective way to improve his level of HL maintenance which is the “satellite television” that his mother installed for his family where he could “watch Korean series and variety shows at home”. In William's LLA, he wrote that,

“This is literally opening the window to a new world! Later at home, I often watched Korean drama and shows. I was intoxicated with the variety shows that Korean people created. Watching TV has also greatly improved my listening skill! It also let me know more about Korean beauty. No just kidding, in fact, mainly understand the Korean cultural and historical geography. Able to learn Korean like this made me to a higher level of the Korean world. I started to understand the language out of the book and Korean TV deepened my understanding of the daily ways of communication of Korean!” – Excerpt from William's LLA.

Like William, I am also ethnically Korean and grew up in China. Comparing us, there are some key reasons why we have different levels of HL language ability. I never took part in any

bilingual program in school, but he was in a Korean and Chinese bilingual elementary school which also made him a better writer in academic Korean. He used more HL than me because he stayed with grandparents who can only speak Korean and his parents were both Korean teachers. I lived with my parents and my dad was not a fluent Korean speaker when I was a child. William also had an earlier chance to watch original series and shows in Korean where he could learn more native Korean than me.

Thus, parental involvement and family environment into HL learning are very important. Researchers have suggested that parents who actively involve their children in everyday conversations, problem solving, and family interactions through the use of the HL tend to be successful in intergenerational transmission of the language. Furthermore, whether parents engage their children in HL literacy activities (in addition to orality) at home also matters. In all of my participants' stories, their parents built a successful heritage language learning environment for their kids, no matter where they were living. Bob, an American-born Chinese, studied in Shanghai International School for 15 years; Emma, also an American-born Chinese, studied in Shenzhen until 8; and William, ethnically Korean, participated in bilingual education in elementary school. Another important learning support came in the form of visits to the original country. Alice had at least one-time chance to visit Korea with her family each year, which helped her build awareness of Korea and strengthened a sense of national belonging.

However, relying on parents alone was not enough for the immigrant children become bicultural and bi-literate. Participants described that institutional support from policy makers and schools is needed. Especially in relation to writing, support from schools and classrooms are more important to HL learners. In Emma's LLA, she described that her writing skill in Chinese were less developed because of the lack of an educational environment.

“After coming back to the States, I kept speaking Chinese with my family members and read books with Chinese in it so that I won't forget the language. That helped me a lot for maintaining my speaking and reading skills. However, it was hard to maintain my writing skills

because there weren't any chances for me to write Chinese. Thus, I'm not very good at writing Chinese anymore. From my experience, I think the environment is really important for learning a language." – Excerpt from Emma's LLA.

Bob also experienced a similar situation. Since he was born in the U.S, his parents had to send him and his brother to the International school where the language of instruction is mainly in English. Chinese is only one of the courses that students were taking in the curriculum. This resulted in stronger academic writing skills in English than in Chinese. Although, he and his family were more likely to talk in Chinese at home, when he went to school, English was the language he used to communicate with peers, which was also partly because his classmates were international students who born in different countries other than China.

Meanwhile, before William got the chance to watch "satellite television" at home, his family actually moved from Beijing to a new city Qingdao where he changed his school.

"Came to Qingdao, I also continue to go to a bilingual Korean-Chinese primary school. But due to the changes in the surrounding environment, friends around me almost all speak in Chinese, so that I rarely had the opportunity to use the Korean. Although I went to a Korean school, I only speak Chinese with my friends except in Korean class, so I felt a deep sense of crisis by decreasing my proficiency of Korean." – Excerpt from William's LLA.

Compare this to Bob and William, who both went to the school where they were provided the HL class to maintain their HL learning. But since the HL is just a minority language in that context and space, they tended to be more influenced by the majority language that teachers and peers used. For Emma, it was even worse because there was no Chinese class in the curriculum at all.

An analysis by Kim (2011) showed that the heritage language school functions as a social and emotional support system, a buffer for reducing the detachment from parents, and a safety net for Korean-American children's challenging lives. Children who are taught to read and write in an HL and have consistent opportunities to interact in the HL through written texts tend to have more positive attitudes toward the language and are less likely to lose the language (Fishman, 1991; Schecter & Bayley, 2002; Vasquez, Pease-Alvarez & Shannon, 1994). Support from

institutions both inside and outside the ethnic communities can greatly shape an individual's positive attitudes toward his/her HL. Research has reported that when schools devalue students' first language and enforce English-only policy it often results in students' negative attitudes toward their first language and culture and their rapid language shift to English (G. Li, 2005; Valdes, 2001). Thus, whether school can provide a positive environment is extremely important to HL learners. If the school environment is not strong enough to facilitate children's HL learning, then HL learning is dependent on parents and family members creating a positive environment at home. In this way, kids have their best chance to learn and maintain HL in both inside and outside the school settings.

Interestingly, all of the Asian-Americans mentioned feelings of Asian shame. They described "double identities" as both Americans and members of an Asian ethnic minority. This double identity prompted an ongoing and constantly changing effort to "find themselves" or understand themselves within available identity categories. Participants identified 5 sources of struggle related to their identities: 1) the influences of white privilege; 2) cultural power both from white and black community which often leaves out Asian and other racial or ethnic categories; 3) language insecurity related to the dominant language in the setting they were in 4) developing a transformed relationship from a growing sense of racial power; and 5) the desire to fit in with the dominant use of English and be Americanized.

For example, Bob described:

"This uniqueness always made me feel more American than Chinese, especially when people always compliment my fluent English and how I sound just like an American. Also, given the fact that China's culture was not nearly as influential as that of America's at the time, I always prefer to identify as an American and I genuinely felt ashamed to be called Chinese. When I went to Shanghai High School International Division, my sense of "American pride" and "Chinese shame" became greatly amplified. This should come as no surprise, because most classes were taught using English, and I was essentially in a social bubble with other very like-minded people. At one point, my shame in my Chinese heritage became so strong, that when me and my parents visited America, I specifically told them not to speak Chinese to me in public or I would just ignore them. Me and my like-minded friends also took great pride in discriminating against anyone that looked like a stereotypical Chinese and spoke English with an accent. The bottom

line is, we thought we were superior to the local Chinese students, because we identified as Americans and that we spoke fluent English.” – excerpt from Bob’s LLA.

From the interview, Bob talked about the American pride among his friends as well:

“My friends and I considered ourselves as Americans who were more superior than the locals. And the way how the local people treat us was like we were more superiors than them... We think it’s ashamed to be with locals. We even rarely play basketball with them.”

Bob’s sense of “American pride” and “Asian shame” was coming from the influential “White Privilege” and peer culture in his high school. Because he can speak fluent English, both white and American culture were privileged. Even native Chinese were overwhelmingly admiring of American culture and used it as an entryway to gain status in China, but in the U.S. context, Bob struggled to be credited with an “American advantage.” Besides their sense of American pride, the native Chinese who excessively worshiped American culture also strengthened their sense of superiority at that time.

But when he moved back to the U.S, what he experienced here totally changed his idea and let him get rid of the sense of American pride. He now doesn’t feel any shame in being Chinese.

“When I went to America for college at the age of 18, I was very excited and thought I would be welcomed with open arms. However... The general attitude of the local students and residents towards the Asian and Chinese communities, was rather bigoted to say the least. This was a far cry from my grand vision of a new life in America, but at the time I still had my "American pride" and "Chinese shame" with me, so I refused to mingle with the Chinese communities. During my time in Altoona, I so rarely spoke Chinese, that I ended developing a thick foreigner accent for my Chinese, which remains with me to this day... In a weird way, I'm glad that I had to live in Altoona, because it allowed me to finally break out of my bubble. Now, I view both America and China equally, and I use my bilingual capabilities for a social purpose rather than a discriminatory purpose. By showing my American side to Americans, and showing my Chinese side to Chinese, I am able to quickly build rapport with either communities.” - From Bob’s LLA.

Research is showing that the social construction in action (Lantolf and Pavlenko 2001) of learners’ imagined communities (Norton 2001; Pavlenko and Norton forthcoming) can nourish investments in learning (Norton 2000) and the building of new identities as second language (L2)

users (Cook 1999). When Bob came back to the States, he still couldn't find his imagined community to speak Chinese which resulted in his thick foreign accent for his Chinese. However, at the same time, this sudden transmission of Bob's sense of self-identity occurred right after the time he went back to the States. In the interview, I asked him about why this sudden transmission happened, whether the discrimination from local people to Asian people played a role. He offered a point of view on the cultural power in the United States:

“Yes. Although the United States is a diversified country, white culture still plays a dominant role. Asian culture was not like black culture which is very influential now, especially their hip-hop culture. But Asians had no advantage and had always been regarded as a stereotype of conservative nerd people. Asians would be more likely to feel shameful about their identity. But it might have been a decade ago, now China is getting stronger. Coupled with the growing influence of Korean culture, the Asian group will be less and less humiliated by their identity.”

The idea of “China Rising” helped Bob gain his confidence to reduce his shame of being a Chinese even as the local people around him didn't create an open atmosphere for him. When he meets new friends, Americans tend to ask him “Where are you from? Your English is so good, how did you learn it?” His look and appearance is more like an Asian person so even though he is American-born, people won't consider him as a person who originally from the States. He was also fed up with struggling with himself, feeling uncomfortable when people were having those conversations with him. So he finally started to embrace himself as an American-Chinese instead of American. Besides, both the environment and the transforming relationship from racial power stimulated him to be changed. School racial climate plays a big role for him to change his cultural identity from an American to an American-Chinese. It is extremely interesting to see that he felt more American in orientation in China, but Chinese in orientation when he was back to the U.S. His experience and transition of self-identity between two countries indicate the importance of the time, space, and people who are around him.

From the interview with Alice, we talked about the different phases that she went through as well:

“Yeah yeah so elementary school, you know you were young, you don’t have to think about stuff like that. But then ever since middle school, high school, I was always trying to find like myself. So like I went through a lot of phases, like went through the get on stage. Just like I don’t know hang out with a lot of black people, Spanish people, follow their trend, work close like that. The way I talk was really different. Um... yeah I was kind of embarrassing. And I also went through like a white phase, cause where I lived was predominantly white where we moved to. It’s like predominantly Jewish area. So I follow all their trends like wearing the custom, pop my color, it was just. It wasn’t that bad at that phase. It was like a normal trend but... I also went through an Asian phase like I went through a Korean phase like I cut my bangs which was my worst decision that I made in my life... And then I would also like only listen to Korean songs, and only hang out with Korean people, yeah I had that time. um... what else is there. Yeah I went through a lot of phases and it was very interesting when you were grown up.” – transcript from the interview with Alice.

When I asked her about her view of cultural power, Alice said that:

“I think we are lower than black people... Yeah they’ve had very strong presence, they are like almost equal to white but not equal. You know and like there’s all these like always you know black matters, but the same thing happens on Asians, we don’t ever say anything, even if we do, no one ever hears it. It’s also focused about black people. But definitely there is a difference I guess view on racism.”

Cultural power played a huge role in both Alice and Bob’s life. It should not be shocking for us to see Alice when she was always trying to change her imagined communities through different phases of time and was influenced from racial and ethnic identifiers to “find herself.” The ways of finding a powerful identity is always changing from time and space and who she was around. This happened with Emma when she came back to the States too.

“Talking about self-identity, I’ve struggled through a lot. When I came back to the U.S., I had difficulty speaking English and getting used to the new environment. Especially for six graders, everyone was new to school, so nobody helped me out in the new semester. However, I was quick at adjusting myself and soon made some friends. One thing that troubled me the most was to blend into the culture. I didn’t know whether or not I should throw away my own culture and fully blend into the American culture, so I swung on the edge for a while. At one point I only hung out with American friends and don’t want to make friends with Chinese students. I felt ashamed speaking Chinese in school because people would give you weird stares or won’t talk to you. For some reasons, I just didn’t feel confident about my identity as a Chinese anymore.” – from Emma’s LLA

One reason why Emma felt ashamed of being Chinese was related her the language insecurity from discrimination from her classmates. School climate and peer culture started to play a huge role on her.

Another interesting finding from the three Asian-American participants is that they all indicated that the older they are, the better they could accept their double-identity of being Asian-Americans. Thus, biculturalism also seems to be developmental process that varies from individual to individual. (Lee 2004, p. 125)

“Now that I think of it, it was immature of me to do that because I was denying my own culture and ethnicity. To be honest, there are so many wonderful characteristics and personalities in the Chinese. Now I identify myself as Chinese American and I’m involved in both cultures. I’d love to make friends with both Americans and international student and make use of my experiences and advantages to help them. I shouldn’t lose my identity as being a Chinese, but instead, it could be more of an advantage having and sharing two cultures.” – excerpt from Emma’s LLA.

It is great to see that they can break the bubble as time passes and make use of bi-culture and bi-literate advantages in their daily lives. This trait of biculturalism not only happened with the three Asian-Americans but also William. However, his ways of identifying himself as an ethnic Korean in China differ from those subjects who are Asian-Americans in the U.S. He didn’t put much effort on changing his cultural-identity all the time when he was growing up. At the beginning, he knew how to adapt himself into the community around him very well. Part of the reason is because China, unlike the United States, is not a multi-racial country, although there are 55 minorities ethnic in China. There are far less chance to be discriminated by others because of the color of skin or race differences and all of the minorities are governed by one political party. The school climate means it more likely that non-Chinese Asian students will be embraced by friendly teachers and peers, especially so for the third generation of ethnic-Koreans who were born in the mainland of China like me and William. As an ethnic-Korean in Chinese schools, I didn’t feel any “difference” in a bad way but “special” wherever I went. People tended to ask me more questions about family culture and were interested in our life styles rather than being bullying or demonstrating discrimination.

School is like a double-edged sword; sometimes it can protect you, and sometimes you got hurt from there. That is why Freiberg and Stein (1999) described school climate as “the heart

and soul of the school and the essence of the school that draws teachers and students to love the school and to want to be a part of it.” This renewed emphasis on the importance of school climate was further reinforced by a meta-analysis study performed by Wang et al. (1997), who found that school culture and climate were among the top influences in affecting improved student achievement.

Norton (1997) defines identity as “how people understand their relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how people understand their possibilities for the future”. From my subjects’ stories, they felt compelled to look for a true self and to place themselves into a right position that best fits them. The more mature they become, the better relationship seemed to develop with the world around them, at least related to their ethnic and national identities.

When asking about their motivation of learning HL language, I specifically asked them whether HL helped them increasing their competitiveness in job market and benefit for their work. They answered yes. William is getting his master’s degree in Japan. I asked him “What is the influence of you as a Chinese but also an ethnic Korean living in Japan? Would you like to show your dual-identity of Chinese and Korean at the same time?” He answered me, “Well it actually also depends on the context. If someone said that I am looking like a Korean, then I would add that information.” He works in a duty-free shop, so the advantages are fully developed. “There is an advantage in work because I can speak one more language than others.”

For Alice, the advantage is also fully developed for her work.

“I would say that knowing the language has helped me communicate better with non-English speaking customers at work, translating for others, or even helping me get around in certain areas. It also helps me understand things that most people wouldn’t understand because only Korean-speaking people could understand. Such as things like jokes, or cultural norms, etc.”
– excerpt from Alice’s LLA

Chapter 4

Relationship between HL Proficiency and Cultural Identity

As I will describe below, a lot of research has been done regarding the relationship between HL proficiency and cultural identity. For the majority of Chinese and Korean pupils attending complementary school – heritage schools - the purpose of attending complementary school is to learn the ‘mother-tongue’. A primary benefit of this replication of heritage language proficiency relates to ethnic identity, with a diverse range of potential additional benefits. Many authors have analyzed how complementary school pupils often saw proficiency in the heritage language as a key signifier of the related racial, ethnic, or national identity. From Park’s study in 2007, Korean parents believe that their children’s high level of proficiency in the Korean language would help their children keep their cultural identity as Koreans, ensure them better future economic opportunities, and give them more chances to communicate with their grandparents efficiently. In Lee’s study in 2004, she examines the relationship between HL proficiency and cultural identity and performed a regression analysis. “The results showed that the Korean orientation score and the Korean language proficiency score had a significant effect on each other at the probability level. The results support the argument that language is a salient part of culture and cultural identification and that knowledge of a culture entails knowledge of the language that is representative of that culture.” However, the results also showed that “those who had high Korean proficiency also identified strongly with the American orientation items. This may be explained by Lambert’s (1975) argument that those who are likely to have maintained their heritage language and culture are more likely to be better adjusters in American society, because they are ‘comfortable with themselves’. He maintains that you cannot take away a part of their being such as their ethnic heritage and expect people to be well acculturated in the society”

(p. 129). This result exactly fit into Alice's situation in this study. She is comfortable with herself, has maintained HL and culture, but also adjust to American society very well.

Agnes Weiyun, (2014) argues that identity is dynamic, constantly unfolding along with interaction, and thus has the potential to shift and mutate. It positions identity as emerging through co-participants' responses and reactions and thus as an intersubjective and reciprocal entity. It further suggests that identity construction is intricately linked with heritage language learning. (Anges, 2014) In Mau's study, he also indicates that "young people of Chinese heritage with limited Mother-tongue abilities demonstrates that for those 'not speaking Chinese', this did not preclude their identification as Chinese (or Chineseness remaining an important aspect of their identity)"(Mau, 2013). In this study, Bob and Alice also made contributions to prove this view. From their LLA and interview, they believe that language proficiency does not positively correlate to the one person's national identity. Alice can speak fluent and advanced Korean. In the interview, she couldn't help herself talking about how she feels proud of the perfect Korean she maintained:

“But the one thing that the most native Korean people surprised about is my pronunciation. Yeah, so I guess I'm proud of it... I don't know it's... I mean I like being Korean I just would never live in Korea.”

But then she talked about a party held by Asian people once in a bar, she mentioned that:

“I felt like a white person there. I really feel like a white person hahaha! Yeah I guess the point is like it's awkward being with them... because when I went to quiz my proficiency exam, there were all native Koreans, and like just there five was so different from me, and like I don't know like I don't even wanna... I feel uncomfortable being around them so it was like...”

Talking about the self-identity, she still considers herself more Americanized:

“Personally, learning the language of my heritage wasn't so helpful with my self-identity. It makes me question myself like, “Should I be embracing my heritage more?” or “Am I too American to get along with Native-Koreans?” Questions along those lines. Overall, I consider myself to be an American because I know more about American culture, norms, and etc., than those of Korea. Also, I respect the values and lifestyle of America more than Korea. There are many things I do not appreciate about certain things in Korea, so I am grateful in many ways that I was born here in America. I thank my parents enormously. To this day, I can still

read, write, speak, and understand Korean. I believe it is a great thing to know your own heritage language.” – From Alice’s LLA

All in all, she is proud of herself of speaking perfect Korean, but that doesn’t help her to want to identify herself as a “real Korean”. She is so familiar and feels that she can completely fit into the Americanized life style, which has a huge difference from Korea. She still couldn’t fit in or felt uncomfortable fitting into the Korean or Asian group and she doesn’t care that much to do so. “I don’t fit in any group and I’m fine with it.” That was Alice’s attitude. Bob also mentioned that both of he and his friend think that there is not always a positive correlation between language proficiency and whether Asian people feel ashamed or proud of mother-tongue culture.

“Well anyway, it (heritage language) didn’t play such a big role for me... Yeah, everyone is different. Things have different impacts on people as well. So there is no way to say ‘Wow there is an All-For-One theory’ for social science.”

In Bob’s opinion, HL for some people may have a positive correlation for building their mother-tongue cultural identity, but this isn’t true for everyone because the background is different from individual to individual. Even though both Alice and Bob could speak a fluent heritage language, they do not just identify themselves as a pure Korean or Chinese. For Alice, she always identifies herself as an American rather than Korean, even though she has no feelings of Korean shame now and can always speak perfect Korean. Bob, on the other hand, is more likely to identify himself as a Chinese-American, which allows him to show his dual-identity self. Another participant, William, shared an old saying from South Korea “shen tu bu er” in his interview:

“That is to say, your body is integrated with the land that you grow up. If you haven't grown up in this land, then you are not belonging in our group. With this thought, it is normal when you see Koreans only embrace themselves as a group. On the issue of integration, language is just an insignificant thing on the surface, I just consider it as a tool for communication. What is more important is the sense of identity from the heart.”

Although for some of the people, it is beneficial to build a cultural identity by improving the HL maintenance, there is not a positive correlation between one’s language proficiency and

cultural identity because of the huge variety of personal background among them. For those young people who are not able to speak the heritage language, this did not preclude their identification as Chinese: these young people drew on a range of signifiers of Chinese culture, connection, and engagement to position themselves as wholly or partly 'Chinese'. (Mau, 2013)

Thus, it is not supported to make the conclusion that the proficiency of HL learning is found to be always positively correlated to national belonging and cultural identity. That is to say, neither every person who can speak perfect HL (for example an American-born Korean who can speak perfect Korean) is going to identify himself as a completely Korean person, nor is every person who cannot speak a HL very well going to be disidentified with their home country and culture. However, certainly, we as teachers and educators are getting more aware of fostering children who are learning HL, not only by teaching the language itself but also promoting traditional culture, so that HL learners are able to be proud of their own culture from their hearts inside deeply. I believe that would help more people to get the sense of national belongings. I would also love to mention that the American pride and Asian shame are not only because they receive the unequal treatments outside the home country, but also comes from the excessive xenocentrism from the people inside the country.

To examine participants' cultural identity is always a complex inferential and social process. From a language socialization perspective, this is because our understandings of which acts and stances constitute resources for constructing particular cultural identities are limited. However, group and cultural identities are particularly relevant and salient in heritage language education. As Hall (1992, p. 235) explains, 'Identity lives with and through, not despite, difference: by hybridity'. Our interest lies especially in understanding the complex workings of power that are involved in negotiations between parents, teachers and pupils over the symbols and markers of 'culture' and 'ethnic identity' (notably struggles around 'hybridized' or 'authentic' cultural identities; see Archer et al. 2010).

Chapter 5

Implications for HL Maintenance Programs and Educators

The anxiety of the learner of the inheritance language has been a concern of researchers in recent years (e.g., Coryell & Clark 2009; Xiao & Wong, 2014). Ethnic identity is crucial to the education of inheritance. From the analysis in chapter 3, we already talked about Asian-American's HL and identity anxiety through their life experience especially where school climate made an effect on them. Peer culture and power equalization especially played huge roles for minority students. A school principal that creates a culture that promotes and encourages learning is absolutely essential in order to improve student achievement in schools (Freiberg 1999, Sergiovanni 2001). Successful leaders have learned to view their organizations' environment in a holistic way. As stated by Fairman and Clark (1982) in more precise and descriptive language, healthy schools are schools that exhibit the following types of cultures, also known as dimensions of organizational health: goal focus, communication, optimal power equalization, resource utilization, cohesiveness, morale, innovativeness, autonomy, adaptation and problem-solving adequacy. This implicates the head teacher of HL maintenance program and educators should take the responsibility of building a safe and diverse school climate for the students with diverse background.

At the same time, HL education should strengthen cultural teaching, increasing positive orientation to mother-tongue national belongings and cultural connotations. The good thing is that there are lots of after-school programs organized by the Chinese American community that includes not only HL but also Chinese dance, Kung Fu, Chinese arts and other practices, supporting HL learning through music, dance, art and other relevant practices.

Inheritance education should also respect and adapt to these diverse forms of identity and love. People need to know where they were from, where they rooted, and where they belong. The proper teaching philosophy of HL should balance consciousness of identity among groups, so as not to cause conflicts and creating feelings of rejection or marginalization, thereby exacerbating language anxiety.

In teacher training programs, teacher educators should also pay more attention on recruiting the teachers who can fully understand students' attitude toward HL learning, including Asian-Americans or other ethnic groups. They will also need to strengthen the diversity of well-designed and organized activities to foster students' passion and participation in learning. More reading and writing workshops are needed because lots of students such as Emma and Bob in this study, have expressed concern with their writing skills regarding the lack of use and practice of written HL. Further mature and rigorous qualitative research on national identity and language anxiety is required in the future.

This study aimed to find out the main factors affected HL learning and the relationship between HL proficiency and cultural identity. I found out that personal background, family and school involvements play a big role of HL language learning. Cultural and language power of the ethnic nation play a huge role on building one's self identity. There is not a positive correlation between one's HL proficiency and self-identity, although identity construction is linked with heritage language learning. (Angeles, 2014) It depends on many other factors and differs from individual to individual. Last but not the least, HL education should strengthen cultural teaching, increasing positive orientation to national identification and cultural connotations. Creating a supportive school and class climate play a significant role for students building a safe and healthy identity.

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