

Heritage Language Learning Motivation, Self-Perceived Identity and Maintenance among Chinese-American College Students

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore different levels of Chinese American heritage language learners' self-perceived ethnicity and the relationships among their identities, learning motivations, language behaviors, and views of heritage language maintenance. All participants (N=12) completed the Survey of Chinese as Heritage Language Learner and the survey of Attitudes/Motivation Test Battery to measure the participants' self - perceived ethnicity, learning motivations and language behaviors. Their processes of heritage language maintenance were explored through in-depth interviews. The results of this research demonstrated that the language preferences of participants' in different levels of Chinese courses were affected by different environments. Learners in the upper-level group demonstrated higher enthusiasm to practice Chinese with their family members. The higher their willingness to practice Chinese, the better their heritage language could be maintained. In order to develop new approaches in heritage language instruction, future studies might consider exploring the question of to what extent heritage language achievement affects learners' heritage language maintenance by comparing heritage learners at different proficiency levels.

Keywords

heritage language maintenance, learning motivations, self-perceived identities, language behaviors

Introduction

It is important to realize that heritage language maintenance (HLM) is not only an individual process, but also a social process that involves connections with schools and teachers (Vygotsky, 1978). Therefore, addressing how to deal with various needs of language learners from different backgrounds has been a particular concern for Chinese language programs in the US. The learners in Chinese language classes have been generally categorized into two groups: heritage language learners (HLLs) and non-heritage learners (Non-HLLs) of Chinese. Most of the time, Chinese HLLs are considered to have different language backgrounds than Non-HLLs, who learn Chinese as a foreign language (Lu, 2007; Lee & Kim, 2008). Thus, it is essential for Chinese language educators

to value the individual's characteristics and figure out what factors affect Chinese HLLs in maintaining their heritage language (HL).

According to Hornberger and Wang (2008), identity is crucial in a child's development and learning because it is related to his/her sense of belonging, values, competence and achievement. HLLs with multiple identities undergo a process of contextually defining themselves according to their relationships to others, so they constantly negotiate, shape and reshape their identities. This complex process becomes an essential concept in the learning of a HL and culture. Thus, studies that address fundamental theory regarding HLLs' learning motivations and self-perceived identities are greatly needed in order to understand the path of HL development and maintenance.

The purpose of this study was to explore different levels of Chinese American HLLs' self-perceived ethnicity and the relationships among their identities, learning motivations, language behaviors, and their views of HLM. Three primary research questions are addressed: 1) To what extent does language proficiency affect their learning motivation and their self-perceived ethnicity? 2) What are Chinese American HLLs' language behaviors in different environments? 3) How do Chinese American HLLs in college maintain and view their HL? Exploring these issues of HLM will enrich educators' understanding of what factors contribute to the successful maintenance of Chinese HL and what Chinese HLLs' language behaviors are in different language environments. Addressing these questions may also help educators in developing new heritage learner curricula for classroom teaching.

Theories of ethnic identity development and heritage language acquisition

Tse (1998, p. 15) proposed a model of ethnic identity development based on the experiences of racial minorities that focuses on attitudes toward the heritage and majority languages. The model consists of four major stages: 1) Unawareness, 2) Ethnic ambivalence/evasion, 3) Ethnic emergence, and 4) Ethnic identity incorporation. Considering the perspective of ethnic identity formation and second language acquisition, Tse (1998) proposed that both comprehensible input and club or group membership are essential components of HLM and ethnic identity development. Comprehensible input (CI) theory (Krashen, 1985) refers to linguistic input in the target language that is understandable, while the club or group membership (CM) theory accounts for the emotional connections of a member to the target language group (Tse, 1998). Whether or not the components of CI and CM are present during HL acquisition plays an important role in forming the framework of ethnicity identity

development. Tse's framework of time and ethnic identity development was applied in the current study to understand Chinese HLLs' language development and HLM.

Motivation research in second language (L2) acquisition

Motivation in L2 language learning has been an essential research topic in language education. One of the most influential frameworks for such inquiry is Gardner's (1985) socio-educational model, which integrates attitudes, motivations, and language learning into one model (Dörnyei, 1998; Gardner et al., 2004; Lee & Kim, 2008). Gardner proposed that students' attitudes toward the specific language group influence how successful they will be in language learning. Thus, acquiring a second language not only involves adopting its rules and grammar patterns, but also engaging in new social and cultural behavior, which leads the learners to a new second language identity (Dörnyei, 1998; Lee & Kim, 2008).

Gardner's socio-educational model is structured by two motivational orientations: integrative motivation and instrumental motivation. The former refers to the individual's desire to join the target language group and interest in the cultural values of the target language. The latter is characterized by the individual's desire to obtain some practical or material rewards from the study of the target language (Dörnyei, 1998; Lee & Kim, 2008). Gardner's early studies indicated that integrative motivation had greater influence on the language learning process than instrumental motivation. Yet in later studies, researchers (Au, 1988; Gardner & MacIntyre, 1991) found that instrumental motivation also has a significant influence on language learning outcomes. The power of integrative motivation may not necessarily be superior to that of instrumental motivation.

In order to adopt a wider vision of motivation, Tremblay and Gardner (1995) extended Gardner's socio-educational model by expanding Gardner's social psychological construct of L2 motivation (Dörnyei, 1998). In the revised model (see Tremblay & Gardner, 1995), motivation is characterized as consisting of "motivational behavior" and "adaptive attributions," which are also called "motivational antecedents" (Dörnyei, 1998; Lee & Kim, 2008). "Motivational behavior" includes three characteristics: attention, motivational intensity, and persistence, while "motivational antecedents" include: goal salience, valence, and self-efficacy. Tremblay and Gardner's (1995) framework shows that language attitudes influence the mediator variables of goal salience, valence, and self-efficacy, which in turn shape motivational behavior (Dörnyei, 1998). In this

study, their framework was used to analyze the Chinese HLLs' learning motivation.

Methodology

All participants were students at a Midwestern university in the United States. The Chinese program of this university has four levels of language courses, elementary level to advanced level. The lowest level courses, C101 and C102, are offered in the fall and spring semesters respectively, and are normally where students begin their Chinese language learning, though some begin at higher levels if they pass a language placement test or the advanced placement (AP) exam in high school. C201/C202 levels are also identified as lower-level, while C301/C302 and C401/C402 are identified as higher-level courses. Students are therefore identified as lower or higher level on the basis of the standards of the Chinese language courses in which they are enrolled. In this study 12 HLLs were selected (6 in lower-level and 6 in upper-level Chinese courses). All of the participants in this study started with C101 without skipping any Chinese level. Thus, being in the upper-level group indicated that these HLLs had been learning Chinese for a longer period of time, at least during their college years, than HLLs in the lower-level group.

The Survey of Chinese as Heritage Language Learner (SOCALL)

All participants were asked to fill out the SOCALL survey (See Appendix A), which is adapted from Zhu (2010). There are 10 items in the demographic section. This scale also investigates how Chinese heritage learners identify themselves in terms of how they dress and eat and how they perceive their height and weight by using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("Very Chinese") to 5 ("Very Americanized").

The language behavior scale examines participants' language behaviors with immediate family, extended family, and peers and teachers at school. Participants are asked to answer each question according to a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("Almost or always Chinese") to 5 ("Almost or always English"). Open-ended questions make up the final section of the SOCALL survey. This section consists of three short answer questions that explore participants' views about HLM and how they achieve it.

Survey of Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB)

The survey of Attitude Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) was adapted to measure attitudes, motivation, and anxiety associated with learning Chinese (see Appendix B). This adapted AMTB survey (Gardner, 1985; Gardner, 2004; Tennant

& Gardner, 2004) consists of 10 items, each of which represents one of five language variables: Integrative Orientation (1 item, No.1), Attitudes toward the Learning Situation (3 items, No. 2, 5, 8), Motivation (3 items, No. 3, 4, 10), Anxiety (2 items, No. 7, 9) and Instrumental Orientation (1 item, No. 6). Each item was rated on a 6- point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

In-depth Interview

The interview focused on the process of HL learning and maintenance as well as HLLs' language behavior preferences in different contexts. There were a total of 15 questions. Some questions concerned the subjects' language backgrounds and language learning processes, while others explored more detailed information than that obtained in the survey. There were also some questions addressing participants' experiences in school and with families, and the different types of activities in which they participated. These interviews enabled the researcher to obtain a greater understanding of Chinese HLLs' views on ethnic identity, language education and HLM.

Results and discussion

Research Question 1

To what extent do Heritage Language Learners' Chinese language levels affect their self-perceived ethnicity and learning motivation?

Heritage Language Learners' Chinese levels and Self-perceived ethnicity

To measure the self-perceived ethnicity among Chinese HLLs, the Chinese American Self-Perceived Identity Scale included in the SOCALL survey was used. The results (See Table 1) showed that the lower-level group identified themselves as mostly Americanized, while the upper-level group tended to identify themselves as more Chinese American.

Table1 Chinese heritage learners' self-perceived ethnicity

No.	Questions	Overall Mean	Upper-level Mean	Lower-level Mean
7	How would you describe yourself at home?	2.83	2.67	3.00
8	How would you describe yourself in Chinese classes?	3.42	3.17	3.67

Such a distinction may be explained by the notion that HLLs in the upper-level group have usually been learning Chinese for a longer period of time in college

than HLLs in the lower-level group and so their self-perceived identities in classes might be influenced by their deeper knowledge of the language and its culture.

A similar result is found for the question of how they described themselves at home (See Table 1). The lower-level HLLs identified themselves as Chinese American at home while the upper-level HLLs pictured themselves as mostly Chinese. Such a distinction may reflect that HLLs in the upper-level group use the HL more frequently at home than the lower-level group because they have more confidence in their HL skills, which in turn encourages them to speak Chinese with their native-speaking family members. Their improvement of HL skills in school might further assist their understanding of their culture, HL development and HLM. The following interview data further explain the positive association between Chinese language level and the self-perceived Chinese identity.

In the in-depth interviews, 10 participants pointed out that it was very difficult to define whether they were more Americanized or Chinese. Yujia, from the lower-level group, stated:

“I consider myself a Chinese-American or Taiwanese-American. This is just because it’s a combination of both cultures. When I am in America, I feel that I am more like an Asian, but when I am in Taiwan, I am definitely not like an Asian anymore. I feel more American. So, it’s really like it’s both.”

In other words, HLLs found that their identities changed according to their environment or the people they were with. Weijing, another student, from the lower-level group, also mentioned that his identity switched according to the ethnicity of different friends he was with. He explained:

“I will say I am an ABC [American-born Chinese]. ABC sounds cool. I think it really depends on the situation like the environment you are in. For instance, if I hang out with people from Asia, I will become more like them, and when I hang around with more American people, I act more like them. For the most part, I am probably more like an American because I have lived in the US for so long.”

Weijing was not able to define his identity at first. He finally decided that he is more Americanized because he has lived in the U.S. longer than in Taiwan. On the other hand, Yuansi from the upper-level group felt there were advantages to having two cultural identities. He stated:

“I started wondering who I was when I was maybe in high school. Everyone in high school experiences an identity phase. It’s easier for me to make friends with American people rather than international students. So, I am more Americanized. But, I don’t want to be considered a complete American. The more cultures you know, the better you will be.”

Yuansi’s comment suggests that HLLs experience the “ethnic ambivalence/evasion” stage (Tse, 1988) during their ethnic identity development. They begin to wonder who they are once they realize that there are many ethnic groups surrounding them. Furthermore, Yuansi saw advantages to having two identities. He believed that a dual cultural identity made him better than having only one. This sense of dual identity superiority may derive from his Chinese level, suggesting that the longer he had been taking HL courses in college, the more advantages he found in having dual identities.

On the contrary, HLLs like Weijing might take on the identity of friends from different ethnic groups whom he happened to be with. But, eventually, he chose only one identity with which he felt more comfortable. Weijing explained:

“When I was a freshmen and sophomore, I wanted to be everybody’s friend. So I spoke Chinese to Chinese people like 你好! 你是中國人嗎? (Hi, are you Chinese?). But now, I just pretend that I really don’t know Chinese. I feel that for Chinese Americans, there is still a big culture gap between Chinese and Americans. For example, I still don’t understand a lot of Chinese jokes and they do not understand a lot of jokes I would make. So, because of that, I used to be friends with lots of Chinese people, but now I have kind of drifted apart. Now, I am probably going more to be American again. I felt like once you picked a side, it’s hard to mix with them. It is hard to mix Chinese people and American people. It’s just like two different roles. You cannot really balance. I felt more comfortable being more Americanized because I understand the jokes. I understand the culture. The more I hang out with Chinese people the more I realize that I am doing a weird thing that American people don’t really do.”

Weijing’s words suggest that he first tried to identify culturally with both Chinese and Americans. Then, he began encountering difficulties socializing with Chinese people because of a language barrier and dissimilar cultural values. He

made a final decision and identified himself as more Americanized due to a stronger sense of cultural belonging.

Heritage Language Learners' Chinese levels and Learning motivation

To measure the attitude, motivation, and anxiety associated with Chinese learning among Chinese HLLs, the AMTB survey results were analyzed according to the categorization of content variables: Integrative Orientation, Attitudes toward the Learning Situation, Motivation, Anxiety, and Instrumental Orientation.

As shown in Table 2, participants showed slightly higher integrative orientation (5.42) than instrumental orientation (5.17) in Chinese learning, identifying their greatest motivation for learning Chinese as having strong desire to interact with Chinese people. However, instrumental motivation, which can be defined as studying Chinese in order to get a good job, was a close second overall and actually higher for the upper level learners. Despite having less language learning experience, the lower level students scored higher than the upper level students on integrative orientation and notably lower on instrumental orientation. This implied that the main motivation for most lower-level HLLs to take Chinese courses is to build up their HL foundation to communicate with others. Since the lower-level students had not yet selected their majors in college, they were uncertain as to whether or not learning and maintaining their HL skills would be highly associated with their future careers.

Table 2 Context and language levels on Chinese HLLs' Chinese learning motivations, attitudes, and anxiety.

Context	Overall Mean	Upper-level Mean	Lower-level Mean
1. Integrative orientation	5.42	5.33	5.50
3. Motivation	5.33	5.17	5.50
4. Anxiety	2.21	2.75	1.67
5. Instrumental orientation	5.17	5.50	4.83

The interviews with the participants further supported the data from the survey. Yangxue from the lower-level group stated, "The reason why I am taking Chinese courses is because I really want to learn how to read and write so that I can better communicate with my grandparents." In addition, Lianwei from the upper-level group also stated:

“I could not imagine going to visit my Taiwanese grandparents and not being able to say a thing to them. It is just kind of like limiting yourself and putting your family off because of the language barrier.”

Thus, being able to communicate with their family members was a priority that motivated HLLs to learn the HL. Additionally, HLLs hoped to improve their reading and writing skills, so that they would be able to understand Chinese culture better, as Yiyuan mentioned.

Comparing the upper-level students and the lower-level students, the results showed that the lower-level group rated their integrative motivation to learn Chinese (5.50) slightly higher than the upper-level group (5.17), while the upper-level group rated their anxiety about learning Chinese (2.75) higher than the lower-level group (1.67). These results imply that as the learners’ build their language skills and advance their level, their anxiety about Chinese decreases their learning motivation. Lianwei, from the upper-level group supported this argument with the following explanation:

“The more you know, the less you realize you know. The higher the proficiency, definitely, the more discouraging it is because it’s so hard. Now I’ve started to get more exposure to issues like economics and politics and diplomacy. There is such a wide range of vocabulary that I realized I did not know.”

Thus, it could be seen that as the HLLs began to encounter learning difficulties as their Chinese level rose, they realized their at-home language proficiency did not provide the complex vocabulary or syntax to discuss complex topics. . They began to put in more effort and adjust their learning habits in order to improve their proficiency.

Although participants on average showed slightly higher integrative orientation than instrumental orientation toward learning Chinese, the upper-level group rated instrumental orientation (5.50) higher than the lower-level group (4.83). This implies that a factor such as securing a good job becomes a vital purpose for the upper-level HLLs to continue learning their HL. Lianwei from the upper-level group further expressed other practical reasons for learning Chinese:

“China now is developing so fast and is becoming a powerful nation. There are many important job positions that require bilinguals now, especially with the US and China relations. There are so few of us that can speak Chinese and English fluently. [The companies] are going to pay good money for people who can do it

well. I will be closing a lot of doors if I cannot develop my Chinese further. [Learning Chinese] is a slow and painful process, but it's a process that I am going to endure."

Lianwei acknowledged the future value of being a Chinese-English bilingual. This instrumental orientation motivated him to maintain and continue learning his HL, even though he found the process of advanced Chinese learning difficult.

Research Question 2

What are Chinese American heritage learners' language behaviors in different environments?

To measure HLLs' language behaviors and preferences, participants' responses to a total of 20 items in Part III of the SOCALL survey were analyzed. Items 16 and 17, referring to the language(s) spoken by the participant's grandparents at home, and items 8 and 9, referring to the language(s) the participant spoke to each grandparent, had means of 1.08 and 1.33 respectively, indicating regular use of Chinese in conversations with these family members, often by necessity. As Yiyuan explained, "To my grandparents, I only speak Chinese because they don't understand English." Yet, whether HLLs can maintain their HL successfully by speaking with their grandparents may depend on the content of their conversations. Simply using conventional Chinese expressions with their grandparents might do little to promote HLLs' language ability as Weijing described:

"I speak to my grandparents in Chinese because they don't understand me in English. But, [we] just [speak with] simple words like 謝謝(thank you), 好 (ok), 吃飯 (have dinner), and 再見 (good-bye). There is nothing really complicated. And anything that is really complicated I probably wouldn't know how to say it anyways."

Weijing's case may be typical in that conversations with older members of the family may not be deep or complex enough to stretch learners' language skills. Furthermore, the results for items 2 and 10 regarding the language(s) participants or their close friends speak, which had means of 4.58 and 4.67 respectively indicate that these Chinese HLLs preferred speaking English to Chinese at school, especially when they were around their peers. This result is consistent with Luo and Wiseman's (2000) and Zhang's (2004) findings, which show that as immigrants' children reach school age, their out-group contact with

friends increases. Because HLLs accept English acquisition in schools, they most likely speak English with friends in school.

Correspondently, item 18, what language(s) do your best friend (s) speak at school received the highest mean value of 4.75, which confirmed that participants' communications with friends at school were almost always in English. During the interview, all participants explained why they preferred speaking English with their peers. Their reasons can be summarized with three related themes, identity, habits, and acceptance by the social group. As Yujia described:

“When I was young I didn't really know who I was. It was kind of confusing. In my school, Asians were still the minority. The majority was white. When I was little, I wanted to be white [as Caucasian] because it's the majority and the majority was accepted. At that time, I wanted to be someone else. Everyone wants to be someone else. To some of my ABC friends, I know they can understand [Chinese], but sometimes, I am not sure if they can really speak Chinese. Because some ABCs don't know how to speak it at all, but most of them can understand. It's weird to speak Chinese with my ABC friends because, since when we were little, we have just been speaking English with each other.”

Because their friends were most likely Americans or American-born Chinese (ABC), English was the default language for HLLs communications in school, especially to be accepted by the majority. From the time they were young, they spoke English with ABC friends, and they could not be sure whether new friends were able to speak Chinese or not. Thus, it would be more safe and comfortable to communicate with each other in English.

HLLs might also feel less confident in their HL, in which they were more likely to make mistakes. As Yuansi said,

“I like to speak Chinese with my parents instead of my friends because when I speak Chinese to my parents, they won't judge me if I say something wrong. But, if I say something wrong with my friends, it's kind of embarrassing.”

If the first language, in this case English is available to both parties in a conversation, and both want to avoid the embarrassment of making mistakes, it is natural they will speak in the language with which they feel most comfortable. Further, analysis revealed that the largest mean difference between the upper-

level and the lower-level groups were in the language(s) they spoke with their mother and their siblings (items 5 and 7). The upper-level group used Chinese with their mother much more than the lower-level group. A practice they found beneficial to their language learning. As Lianwei from the upper-level group stated, “These days I try to speak more Chinese with my Mom in order to practice it. The more I speak the better I get, obviously.”

Similarly, the lower-level group used more English than Chinese when talking to their siblings, while the upper-level group reported a more balanced use of Chinese and English with their siblings. Yangxue from the lower-level group explained,

“My sister can speak a little bit of Chinese, but we just like to communicate with each other in English because it is the way we talked to each other when we were young.”

Weijing shared the same point of view. He stated, “I speak English to my sister. Her Chinese is better than mine. I will say that our main language is English, so it will be strange if we are talking in Chinese. The only situation that we talk to each other in Chinese is when we are talking behind others’ backs.”

In contrast to Weijing and Yangxue’s responses, Qiwen and Lianrui from the upper-level group mentioned that they had been practicing Chinese with their siblings ever since they began studying Chinese in college. Qiwen said:

“Ever since I started studying [Chinese] at college, I definitely use it more with my parents. They want me to practice it. My brother started studying it again when he went to Purdue. Sometimes, we speak to each other in Chinese now. Over the summer at FCI (Flagship Chinese Institute), when I called my family, I would speak to them in Chinese and practice a little bit more.”

These remarks demonstrated that learners in the upper-level group were more willing than the lower-level learners to use opportunities to practice their HL with family members.

Research Question 3

How do Chinese heritage learners maintain and view their heritage language?

Results from the three open-ended questions in the SOCALL survey were analyzed. HLLs reflected that they had a responsibility to maintain the HL in order to understand their heritage culture and pass on the knowledge to the next

generation. They believed that having the ability to comprehend the HL and culture would enable them to discover their ethnic identities.

Table 3 summarizes the top five methods assisting Chinese HLLs in maintaining their HL. Although speaking Chinese with families and friends is a good and natural way to maintain their HL, HLLs ranked “taking Chinese courses” as the most useful and efficient method for HLM. Furthermore, two participants from the upper-level group suggested that reading Chinese novels, watching Chinese movies, and listening to Chinese stories such as holiday, zodiac, and historical stories as well as fairy tales motivated their HL learning and helped with HLM. In other words, HLLs in the upper-level group found that developing reading skills by reading culturally relevant material also assisted their HLM.

Table 31. Top 5 methods of maintaining heritage language

Methods	Frequency
1. Taking Chinese courses	8
2. Practice speaking Chinese with families	7
3. Practice speaking Chinese with friends	7
4. Visiting China or Taiwan	4
5. Chinese media: reading fiction and history, watching movies	2

In addition to taking courses and speaking the HL with family members, Genmei, Weijing and Yuansi further indicated that traveling to China and Taiwan in the summer before they went to college dramatically changed their view of HLM. Weijing said:

“The big thing that really changed me was when I went to Taiwan [in] the summer before I went to the college. I think that really affected me because I gained an appreciation of being an Asian and trying to learn the language. I don’t take Chinese courses because it is easy to get ‘A’s. I can take other courses to fulfill my international studies requirement, but I just do it because I want to learn Chinese. I have so many Asian friends and I want to learn more about myself, especially, when I know more people from Asia. I started to be interested in learning Chinese. If I hadn’t been to Taiwan, I probably would not keep learning Chinese.”

Furthermore, all participants described that high Chinese language proficiency would help them to have the desire to maintain Chinese. As Lianrui from the upper-level group stated:

“If I can't speak Chinese that well, it will be more difficult for me to maintain the language. If I were to think Chinese is hard to learn, then I might be more willing to give up trying to maintain the language.”

Weijing and Wenkai from the lower-level group also believed that increasing proficiency in Chinese gave them confidence to use it. Wenkai observed that “the better I speak Chinese, the more I will speak it in my daily life.” On the other hand, Weijing’s awareness of his current proficiency level seemed to have discouraged his hopes for the future. He stated, “My Chinese is not very good, so I cannot pass it on.” How concerns about language proficiency influenced HLLs’ motivation for HLM can be explained by Tremblay and Gardner’s (1995) extension of Gardner’s socio-educational model. The individual’s self-efficacy, defined as self-confidence in one’s ability to reach a certain level of performance in L2, affects one’s level of motivational behaviors during the process of language learning. Thus, when HLLs have higher proficiency, they build the self-confidence needed to keep learning, which in turn helps with HLM. On the other hand, as in Weijing’s case, loss of confidence in HL proficiency causes the learner to doubt that he can move on to next level.

Even though high proficiency can strengthen HLLs’ ability to maintain their language, Mingwei from the upper-level group pointed out a challenge that he faced. He stated:

“[My proficiency in Chinese] helps with beginning or introduction levels because of simplicity of the class, but when it becomes more challenging, the language used at home cannot be used as crutches. It takes a lot of time and effort to change bad habits and increase proficiency.”

This comment suggests that when HLLs’ proficiency reaches a certain level, they need to change learning strategies in order to maintain or improve their HL. Yiyuan from the upper-level group also believed that “in order to maintain the language, [one] needs to practice more reading and writing skills.” Her belief is supported by Wu’s (2008) study, which indicates that improving one’s ability to read and write has been ranked as the most important goal for Chinese HLLs. Unlike HLs with the same alphabetic system as the learner’s L1, facilitating transfer of listening and speaking skills to reading and writing, a heritage background in Chinese has little or no effect on learners’ writing or reading

comprehension skills. Therefore, Chinese HLLs must focus on their reading and writing skills in order to fully master and maintain their HL.

Conclusion

This study examined Chinese heritage language learners' views of heritage language learning in four aspects: participants' self-perceived ethnicity, learning motivations, language behaviors and heritage language maintenance. The overall findings indicate that heritage learners' self-perceived ethnicity does not have a significant effect on their learning motivation. Although the upper-level students identified themselves as slightly more Americanized than the lower-level students, both groups had high motivation for learning their heritage language. While the number of the participants in this study may be too small to generalize the results to all Chinese HLLs, these participants may be representative enough to show that learning motivation comes from personal interest in identifying with their heritage culture.

In addition, there was an evident association between heritage learners' Chinese level, which refers to how long they have been taking Chinese courses in college, and their self-perceived identity of being Chinese at home and in Chinese classes. Heritage learners' family members and Chinese teachers both played crucial roles in shaping learners' ethnic identity, which in turn influenced their language behaviors. As the interview results demonstrated, most heritage learners preferred to speak the heritage language with their parents rather than peers because they felt more comfortable making language mistakes in front of their parents. Thus, parents may be the best language mentors to promote heritage language learning and heritage language maintenance.

Furthermore, heritage learners in different levels of language courses had different language preferences in related to particular environments. Learners in the upper-level group demonstrated higher enthusiasm to practice Chinese with their family members. The higher their willingness to practice Chinese, the better their heritage language can be maintained. Although learners in the upper-level group encounter difficulties at higher language levels, their instrumental orientation motivates them to continue learning and maintaining the heritage language.

Currently, significant issues include how to transmit the value of heritage language maintenance to learners and how to assist heritage learners, especially those at low-proficiency levels, in enjoying learning the heritage language. These issues warrant a large-scale effort in the future studies.

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APPENDIX A

A survey of Chinese as heritage language learner

Part I: Background/ General Data Information

Please check or fill in the appropriate blanks

1. Gender: _____ Age _____
2. Origin: Mainland China Hong Kong Taiwan Other (Please specify) _____
3. Father's education:
 - Elementary school Junior high High school 4-year college
 - Graduate or professional degree Other (please specify) _____
4. Mother's education:
 - Elementary school Junior high High school 4-year college
 - Graduate or professional degree Other (please specify) _____
5. Which language or languages did you first learn in childhood:
 - Cantonese English Fukenesse Mandarin Chinese/ Putonhua
 - Other (please specify) _____
6. What generation are you?
 - 1st generation = I was born in a country other than U.S.
 - 2nd generation = I was born in U.S., either parent was born in Asia or country other than U.S.
 - 3rd generation = I was born in U.S., both parents were born in U.S. and all grandparents born in Asia or country other than U.S.
 - 4th generation = I was born in U.S., both parents were born in U.S., and at least one grandparent born in Asia or country other than U.S. and one grandparent born in U.S.
 - 5th generation = I was born in U.S., both parents were born in U.S., and all grandparents also born in U.S.
 - Don't know what generation best fits since I lack some information
7. If you are a 1st generation, how old were you when you arrived in the United States? _____

8. How well can you speak Mandarin Chinese

- I cannot speak Mandarin Chinese
- My Mandarin Chinese is good enough to describe a familiar experience or event in simple terms.
- My Mandarin Chinese is good enough to conduct a conversation on a variety of personal and academic topics
- My Mandarin Chinese is good enough to communicate with overall accuracy, clarity and precision
- Native fluency

9. How well can you speak English

- My English is good enough to describe a familiar experience or event in simple terms
- My English is good enough for me to study at an American school
- My English is good enough to conduct a conversational variety of personal and academic topics
- My English is good enough to communicate with overall accuracy, clarity and precision
- Native fluency

10. Who are your friends at the school?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chinese born only | <input type="checkbox"/> Chinese born and American born Chinese |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Asian American only | <input type="checkbox"/> Asian American and European American |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Non-Asian American | <input type="checkbox"/> Others (please specify) |
-

Part II. Please choose the category which best describes you, you parents and your friends. For example, if you think the way you dress is mostly Chinese, you will circle 2 for item 1.

	Very Chinese	Mostly Chinese	Chinese American	Mostly Americanized	Very Americanized			
	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.			
1.				1	2	3	4	5
2.				1	2	3	4	5
3.				1	2	3	4	5
4.				1	2	3	4	5
5.				1	2	3	4	5
6.				1	2	3	4	5
7.				1	2	3	4	5
8.				1	2	3	4	5
9.				1	2	3	4	5

Part III Language Behavior and Preferences

Please choose which best describe the language preference and behaviors of you, your family and friends on the following scale. NA means not applicable. For example, if you do not have a sibling, you will circle NA for item 9.

	Almost or Always Chinese	More Chinese than English	Balanced Use of Chinese & English	More English than Chinese	Almost or always English				
	1	2	3	4	5				
1.	What language(s) do you speak at home?	NA	1	2	3	4	5		
2.	What language(s) do you speak at school?	NA	1	2	3	4	5		
3.	What language(s) do you prefer to speak at home?	NA	1	2	3	4	5		
4.	What language(s) do you prefer to speak at your Chinese school?	NA	1	2	3	4	5		
5.	What language(s) do you speak with your mother?	NA	1	2	3	4	5		
6.	What language(s) do you speak with your father?	NA	1	2	3	4	5		
7.	What language(s) do you speak with your siblings?	NA	1	2	3	4	5		

8	What language(s) do you speak with your grandmother?	NA	1	2	3	4	5
9	What language(s) do you speak with your grandfather?	NA	1	2	3	4	5
10	What language(s) do you speak with your best friend(s) at school?	NA	1	2	3	4	5
11	What language(s) do you speak with your other friends at school?	NA	1	2	3	4	5
12	What language(s) do you speak with your teacher at school?	NA	1	2	3	4	5
13	What language(s) does your mother speak at home?	NA	1	2	3	4	5
14	What language(s) does your father speak at home?	NA	1	2	3	4	5
15	What language(s) does /do your sibling(s) speak at home?	NA	1	2	3	4	5
16	What language(s) does/do your grandmother speak at home?	NA	1	2	3	4	5
17	What language(s) does/do your grandfather speak at home?	NA	1	2	3	4	5
18	What language(s) do your best friends speak at school?	NA	1	2	3	4	5
19	What language(s) do your other friends speak at school?	NA	1	2	3	4	5
20	What language(s) does/do your teacher(s) speak at school?	NA	1	2	3	4	5

Part IV. Short Answer questions: Please answer the following questions.

1. Do you feel learning Chinese is important to you or not? Please explain why?
2. What do you do to maintain your heritage language?
3. Do you think your Chinese proficiency will affect the way you maintain the language? Please explain how and why?

.....

APPENDIX B

Survey of Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB)

The following questions ask you how you feel about Chinese language learning. Please place a X in one of the spaces below to indicate the extent to which the statement applies to you.

1. My motivation to learn Chinese in order to interact with Chinese people is:
 Weak 1____: 2____: 3____: 4____: 5____: 6____ Strong
2. My attitude toward Chinese American people is:
 Unfavorable 1____: 2____: 3____: 4____: 5____: 6____ Favorable
3. My interest in foreign language is
 Very Low 1____: 2____: 3____: 4____: 5____: 6____ Very high
4. My desire to learn Chinese is
 Weak 1____: 2____: 3____: 4____: 5____: 6____ Strong
5. My attitude toward learning Chinese is:
 Unfavorable 1____: 2____: 3____: 4____: 5____: 6____ Favorable
6. My motivation to learn Chinese for practical purposes (Ex: to get a good job) is:
 Weak 1____: 2____: 3____: 4____: 5____: 6____ Strong
7. I worry about speaking Chinese outside of class:
 Very little 1____: 2____: 3____: 4____: 5____: 6____ Very much
8. My attitude toward my Chinese courses is:
 Unfavorable 1____: 2____: 3____: 4____: 5____: 6____ Favorable
9. I worry about speaking in my Chinese class
 Very little 1____: 2____: 3____: 4____: 5____: 6____ Very much
10. My motivation to learn Chinese is:
 Very low 1____: 2____: 3____: 4____: 5____: 6____ Very high