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Teachers of English as an Additional Language Manitoba



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TEAL Manitoba Journal welcomes submissions from teachers, students, academics, and anyone interested in the field of teaching English as an additional language. There are three regular sections in the journal:

**Features:** These articles can be theoretical or practical. The range of articles in this section includes: classroom-based activities, methods, strategies, workshop presentations, theoretical and/or academic perspectives, and issues in the TEAL/TESL profession. Articles may include example worksheets, and all articles must include a reference list of materials consulted and quoted when writing the article.

**Reviews:** Reviews of teaching materials and resources are written by practicing teachers and instructors. In addition, we publish reviews of fiction and nonfiction books, websites, articles, movies or anything related to EAL, newcomers and international cultures and issues. A bibliographic reference of the resource being reviewed must be included with the review.

**Voice Box:** Lesson plans, exercises, and resources can be submitted. The purpose of this section is to provide teachers with a forum to share resources that have been useful in the classroom.

**TEAL News:** This section includes updates and news from and about the various associations and schools that are related to teaching EAL in Manitoba.

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The editors make final publication decisions, but they regularly seek advice from the TEAL Manitoba Executive at its monthly meetings. If you wish to collaborate in the editing of your submission, please let the editor know. We appreciate your input and assistance.

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## PRESIDENT'S VOICE

Sandra Melo

It's been a long, cold and challenging winter for many of us in Manitoba. We have conquered enormous snow-hills and countless indoor recesses. But the hopefulness of spring is around the corner and I will take this time to reflect on the changing seasons just like our ever-changing classrooms. In the world of English language learners and teacher education, professional development is crucial to the increasing linguistic, social and emotional needs of the students in our classrooms. It is one way to meet the shifting that occurs in our classrooms over the days.

In the words of Aristotle: He who dares to teach must never cease to learn. Professional development is essential for teachers to enhance the knowledge and skills they need to help students succeed in the classroom. Teacher education includes content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, curriculum knowledge, knowledge of learners and their characteristics, knowledge of educational context, ends, and purposes. (Rebecca Alber, 2011). This certainly applies to English as an Additional Language and to the mandate of TEAL Manitoba in regards the work being done in teacher professional development.

As a SAGE Group, affiliated with the Manitoba Teacher's Society, it is our goal to provide needed and meaningful pro-

fessional development to teacher's working with EAL learners. From the collaborative PD sessions hosted by MTS's Fab 5 series that had a focus on English language learners, to the SAGE conference, professional development remains a main focus for our organization.

I encourage all of our membership to explore and participate in the professional development sessions being offered across the province with regards to EAL and all other professional learning opportunities. In particular, watch for the excellent learning opportunity organized by MTS called Awakening Possibilities: The MTS Conference on Technology at the Victoria Inn, April 16-17, 2014. There are several sessions that will appeal to the diverse needs of the Manitoba classrooms.

On behalf of TEAL, thank you for your continued support through your membership!

Sincerely,  
Sandra Melo  
President

<http://www.edutopia.org/blog/better-professional-development-teachers-rebecca-alber>



## EDITOR'S VOICE

Yi-fang Chen

After an eventful winter break, many of us have returned to our teaching and learning mission. In the EAL field, we as educators have so many challenges in terms of how to provide the most effective instruction to assist students' learning in areas of both content and language acquisition. These challenges also lead us to be better teachers. Of course, it is hard to define a "good teacher". It all depends on the standard that you set for yourself as well as the public expectations. Are you a teacher who has excellent teaching skills? Are you a teacher who tends to inspire students? Are you a teacher whose instruction guides many students to success? A teacher's success can be measured in so many ways. What does being a "good teacher" mean to you?

In this issue TEAL Manitoba Journal looks at the issue of heritage language retention from parent's perspectives. We also consider the development of ethnic identity within the one-parent-one-language paradigm (Döpke, 1992). In our classrooms we all have students who either are immigrants themselves or come from immigrant family backgrounds. Even though our mission is to teach students the dominant language via the mainstream curriculum, we also need to be aware of the development of students' mother languages and ethnic identity. In her article "Heritage language retention: parent's perspectives in a Chinese heritage school", Yi-fang Chen researches challenges for minority parents when they send their children to so-called "Heritage language schools" ("Saturday schools"). What are these parents' motivations and expectations, and how do they assist their children in the process of learning a heritage language, especially one that is not strictly their own? The question of resources for heritage language learning at the personal, societal, and governmental levels are also discussed. The research results show that in this specific ethnic group, socio-economic factors are often more important than socio-cultural reasons. This is due to the economic rise of China and the perceived advantages of being able to function in a Chinese language environment. Parents (Cantonese speakers) believe that even though Mandarin is not their mother tongue, learning Mandarin enables their children the opportunity to engage advantageously in the Chinese market in the future. This, in turn, creates another challenge for the parents themselves since they do not use Mandarin at home and may have limited ability to support their children's language learning. In any case, parents in this study did not have high expectations for their children's

heritage language learning because of the time limitations of the Saturday Chinese school, the lack of resources in the city, and the priority given to mainstream education.

The second feature is a discussion of the impact of the one-parent-one-language principle on immigrant children's ethnic identity development. Fatemeh Mohammadian Haghghi and Naghmeh Babae use the one-parent-one-language principle (OPOLP) to examine the impact on immigrant children in the heritage language maintenance context. Since most research encourages the OPOLP at home, the authors try to present potential negative aspects of this paradigm in an immigrant child's ethnic identity construction. The authors provide two scenarios of how OPOLP impacts children's learning as well as ethnic identity development. They then offer some suggestions for overcoming such negative impact.

Last but not least, the activity box for this issue is a writing activity for intermediate language learners. Led by a picture, students brainstorm to make up a story using different verb tenses. The end product is always full of surprises due to the involvement of the students' fertile imaginations. A sample of this activity is also attached. This activity is best suited for small groups. We hope the activity box will be a useful resource to teachers. Remember, the activity box is an excellent way to share your activity with other teachers. Your contribution is always welcomed and appreciated.

TEAL Manitoba hopes the rest of the semester will be as fruitful and successful as the first half. We would like to thank all of our contributors and volunteers. We also welcome to any submissions to our journal in the future. We accept feature articles, reviews, and lesson plans. We are sure that many teachers will benefit from your contribution. For more information, and for past issues of the TEAL Manitoba Journal, please visit our website -

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# Heritage language retention: Parent's perspectives in a Chinese Heritage language school

BY YI-FANG CHEN

## Abstract

This proposed study intends to explore the challenges that minority language parents may face when they help their children with heritage language retention through heritage language (HL) program. Data was collected from interviews with three parents who have registered their children in a community-based Chinese language school in western Canada. The discussion includes parents' motivation and expectations of the HL program, and the resources they can find for support. The findings show that Mandarin Chinese is rapidly becoming the Chinese heritage language of choice despite the fact that many parents do not speak Mandarin themselves. There are social, cultural and economic considerations associated with this choice, and this may indicate that new understandings of heritage language retention are developing, at least within this ethnic group. The study may thus shed light on how heritage education may be further developed, and provide educators and policy makers with a better understanding of the importance of heritage education from the parents' perspective.

## Key words:

Chinese language, heritage language, language retention, community schools, parental attitudes.

## Introduction

Many immigrant parents send their children to heritage language programs in order to help their children maintain connections to their mother cultures and languages. They seem to be aware that if they do not help their children to learn their heritage languages when they are young, their children may lose not only their mother languages, but their ethnic identities as well (Kouritzin, 2000; Wong Fillmore, 1991). This pertains directly

to the phenomenon known as language loss, which describes a situation in which an individual loses his/her ability to use a language he/she used to have the ability to speak (Fase, Jaspaert & Kroon, 1992; Kouritzin, 2000; Wong Fillmore, 1991). According to Wong Fillmore (1991), language loss in children is correlated to the age when they begin schooling in a non-mother tongue medium. This implies that when minority language children start their social practice at a younger age in an English dominant environment, they tend to surrender their minority language not only due to external factors (English dominant environment) but also due to complicated internal factors (sense of belonging and acceptance by the dominant groups).

Some literature has examined parental roles and attitudes in helping their children maintain their heritage languages (Li, 2005; Lao, 2004). However, there is very little literature exploring the challenges that parents face when they decide to enroll their children in a heritage language program. What are parents' understandings of heritage language maintenance? What are the factors that affect parents' decisions regarding heritage language retention? What do parents expect that their children can learn from the heritage language school? What resources can parents find in the host country? These are important factors, because many studies indicate that language loss will produce negative effects in terms of individuals, families, society, and nations. (Kouritzin, 2000, 2006; Norton, 2000) Conversely, studies related to heritage language maintenance (Yang, 2007; Siegel, 2004; Noels, 2005) show positive correlations between language maintenance and the construction of ethnic identities, personal psychological development, higher self-esteem

and confidence. (Cho, 2000; Tse, 1998). With regard to the correlation between language loss and heritage language retention, my role as a researcher and Master's student in the field of second language education inspires me to investigate what challenges parents may face when they help their children in heritage language retention. In this proposed study, I would like to focus on Chinese heritage language programs in a province in western Canada and to explore: (1) parents' perspectives that lead them to send their children to heritage language programs; (2) the expectations that parents have of a heritage language program; and, (3) other means of achieving the goal of heritage language retention used by parents.

## Background

Much research focuses on issues affecting minority language groups. Language loss (Kouritzin, 2000; Crystal, 2000; Tigheelaar, 2003) refers to when people lose a language ability he/she used to have due to the changing of environment, political, economic, or religious situation, or personal psychological modification. Other issues like language shift (Sandal, Chao, & Liang, 2006) have also been investigated. Language shift is when a community of speakers of one language becomes bilingual and starts a subtle and gradual shift from a mother tongue to the dominant language. This process could be conscious or unconscious. For example, many immigrant parents notice that their children start speaking the dominant language after they start schooling in a host country (Wong Fillmore, 1991). They seem to lose their heritage language ability gradually if they keep using the dominant language. There are also some issues related to language minorities, such as policy and minority language rights (Blackledge, 2003; D'Souza, 2006; Kouritzin, 2006),

minority languages and cultural identities (Kubota, 2001; Pavlwnko, 2003; DeKorne, Byram & Fleming, 2007; You, 2005; Norton, 2000). Studies focusing on the awareness of minority language maintenance provide the field a new understanding of the consequences, including language death (Crystal, 2000), language loss, language shift, and language maintenance. (Tse, 2001; You, 2005)

The theoretical framework informing this study stems from the general understanding of language socialization. Schieffelin and Ochs's language socialization (1986) proposes that children's acquisition of language has a distinct correlation to their acquisition of culture. Children become linguistically and culturally competent through interactions with their caregivers or other more competent community members. Through language learning and communicating with caregivers or community members, children pick up a variety of aspects around the target cultural context, including the values and beliefs of the language, and the social status of people who speak the language. (Park, 2003) The heritage language program in this study provides minority language children an opportunity to practice the target language in culturally specific ways through interactions with competent community members and classmates who have a similar cultural background.

The research site in this study is the Oriental Academy of Chinese studies (pseudonym, abbreviation as OACS), which is a Chinese community school in a province in western Canada that was established in 1974. The original intention in founding this school was to promote Chinese culture and language within the context of Canadian multiculturalism during 1970s. The origin funders were local community members who purposed the goal of maintaining heritage language and culture for future generations. It is a non-profit, non-sectarian and non-partisan organization. According to OACS' official website, there are approximately 200 students enrolled in different classes

during the academic year 2005-2006.

Mandarin language 'instruction is based on the Hanyu Pinyin system and Simplified Characters', which are mainly used in Mainland China. Textbooks are of Canadian content written and produced by the OACS' organization.

Students in OACS are from very diverse language groups including immigrants from China who speak Mandarin or variety of Mandarin dialects and use simplified Chinese characters, immigrants from Hong Kong who speak Cantonese and use Traditional Chinese characters, immigrants from Taiwan who speak Mandarin or a variety of Mandarin dialects and use Traditional Chinese characters. There are also people who have mixed heritage and speak a mix of languages, including immigrants from South East Asian countries who have Chinese heritage and speak languages other than Mandarin. Finally

1 In English, Mandarin can refer to either of two distinct concepts: 1) to Standard Chinese or Standard Mandarin (Putonghua / Guoyu / Huayu), which is based on the particular Mandarin dialect spoken in Beijing. Standard Mandarin functions as the official spoken language of the People's Republic of China, the official language of the Republic of China (Taiwan), and is one of the four official languages of Singapore. 'Chinese' — in practice Standard Mandarin — is one of the six official languages of the United Nations. 2) to all of the Mandarin dialects spoken in northern and southwestern China (Guanhua / Beifanghua / Beifangfangyan). This group of dialects is the focus of this article.—cited by Wikipedia.

2 Simplified Chinese Characters are one of two standard sets of Chinese characters of the contemporary Chinese written language. They are based mostly on popular cursive (caoshu) forms embodying graphic or phonetic simplifications of the "traditional" forms that were used in printed text for over a thousand years. The government of the People's Republic of China has promoted them for use in printing in an attempt to increase literacy. They are officially used in the People's Republic of China or Mainland China, Singapore, Malaysia and the United Nations.

Traditional Chinese is currently used in the Republic of China or Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau. Overseas Chinese communities generally use traditional characters, but simplified characters are used among mainland Chinese immigrants. However, a majority of the Chinese-speaking world does use Simplified Characters. —cited from Wikipedia.

there are people who have no Chinese heritage and who have adopted a Chinese child. Some of the parents speak Mandarin at home, but most of them do not speak Mandarin at home. Such a complex population provides a very dynamic learning environment for language learners.

### Methodology

Because the nature of this study is to seek personal experiences and beliefs, the research methodology I chose is the case study method of qualitative research (Bogden, & Knopp Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2008). Data collection techniques include interviews with three Chinese immigrant parents who have children with different lengths of heritage language learning experiences. The recruitment of the subjects was through purposeful sampling in a Chinese heritage language school in a province in western Canada. Three selected parents were (1) having at least one child enrolled in this Chinese heritage language program and also enrolled in public school in Canada, (2) willing to participate in the research project and (3) willing to devote at least 1 hour to be interviewed. Since the subjects are likely to be speakers of English as a second language, and because I am a fluent Mandarin speaker, the interview questions were outlined in both English and Mandarin so that participants could answer in either language.

Three participants were interviewed individually between October and November 2008. A bilingual (English and Mandarin) letter of consent was signed by the three interviewees before interviewing. The consent letter clearly outlined the purpose and procedure of the study, as well as the nature of the subject participation and confidentiality. Before interviewing and tape-recording, I explained the purpose and procedure of the study, and explained that research participants have the right to withdraw at anytime. Also, participants can choose either English or Mandarin in which to conduct interviews. It turned out that they all want to use English during interviewing. Each interview would last approximately 40 minutes to an hour. All interview processes were audio-taped with some note-taking, and transcribed after-

## FEATURES

ward into text data using pseudonyms.

The three parent participants are father A (Adam), father B (Bill), and mother C (Carol). Their background information is as following:

Adam immigrated to Canada almost thirty years ago. He received his Bachelor's degree in England and Master's degree in Canada. He moved to X city six years ago due to a job opportunity. Before moving to X city, he lived in Toronto and Vancouver due to job opportunities. He has one son who is ten years old and has been learning Chinese for three years in this Chinese school. Adam was born in China and grew up in Hong Kong so he considered himself as a Cantonese speaker. He learned Mandarin in the regular school system till finishing college in Hong Kong. He and his wife speak Cantonese at home so his son is quite fluent in Cantonese.

Bill has a similar background as Adam. He was born in China and grew up in Hong Kong. He learned Mandarin in the regular school system in Hong Kong. He immigrated to Canada about thirty years ago. He received his Bachelor and Master's degree in a province in western Canada so he has lived in X city since he immigrated to Canada. He has two sons at the ages of six and nine, who have learned Chinese for three and six years in this Chinese school. Bill's family lives with the older generation (his parents-in-law) so the language they use at home is mainly Cantonese.

Carol is a non-Chinese heritage parent who adopted her daughter from China four years ago. Her daughter now is five years old. She helps her daughter sign up for this Chinese school this September so her daughter has been learning Chinese for less than one year in this Chinese school. My original proposal intended to recruit Chinese immigrant parents in my study and discover challenges they faced in helping their children with heritage language retention in a host country. However, when I visited this Chinese school, I found that this Chinese school contained diverse language groups with different cultural backgrounds. They are Chinese heritage immigrants from China, Hong, Taiwan, South East Asian countries, people who have mixed heritage, and people who have no Chinese heritage and who have

adopted a Chinese child. Also, since one of my research participants—Carol is a non-Chinese heritage parent who enrolled her daughter in this Chinese language program and was interested in this study, I decided to change my original research title from “Heritage language retention: Challenges for Chinese immigrant parents” to “Heritage language retention: Challenges for parents in a Chinese Heritage language program.” I hope that this study can reflect challenges that parents (heritage or non-heritage parents) encounter when they decide to help their children maintain their heritage language in this Chinese school context.

The interview content was related to: (1) parents' motivation in sending their children to a heritage language program; (2) parents' expectations about what a heritage language program can provide; and, (3) other means parents use to support their children's heritage language retention. All interview questions for parents were related to personal belief, experience, and decision-making.

### Findings

In order to reflect research questions I proposed, I chose to present the themes from the transcript in three directions: motivation of learning Mandarin as a heritage language, the expectation of what their children can learn from a heritage language program, and the community resources for heritage language retention.

### Motivation for learning Mandarin as a heritage language

First, Adam and Bill strongly agreed that learning Mandarin was as like learning an additional skill, which may assist their children's career development. They believed that it is necessary for people to possess various language skills in the globalized world. Bill explained why he enrolled his sons in this Chinese program:

“I want them to learn one more language. Yes, one more language means to give them more opportunities for their social life, to communicate with other culture and people. When they know other language, they will have different social life. For working life, if you know additional language,

there is one special advantage for globalization. You know, you really need to be multilingual. If you just speak one language, the circle could be small, compared to the multilingual ability.”

Carol also agreed that learning an additional language will open up lots opportunities for her daughter. But the main point for her to send her daughter was to learn where she came from and know the people of Chinese culture background. Carol believes that it might be a better way for her daughter to keep connections with her heritage culture and language based on some readings she has done related to experiences from adult adoptees in United States. She did a lot of readings related to experiences of adopting children and being adopted. Some articles indicated that Korean adult adoptees feel so angry with their parents who did not help them preserve their heritage culture and language when they were young, and instead, they were raised as American kids. After reading these articles, Carol felt that she had a responsibility to help her daughter preserve her culture and language. She mentioned:

“The right thing would be to let these children adoptees embrace their heritage culture, heritage language, and to make them proud of where they come from. So that's what we are trying to do. I mean I am not Chinese and I don't have any Chinese culture background, and I will never have any Chinese culture. But what I can do is to offer her access to people who do have language and culture. I can as parents to give her access to these people, and I can help her to be proud of where she come from.”

All of three participants mentioned that this Chinese school provided their children a “good” social environment in different ways. Adam indicated that this Chinese school provided him and his son a social community for making friends and exchanging information. And he mentioned that his son loved to go to this Chinese school because he knew some

good friends there.

Bill pointed out that many Chinese would go to church and make friends in churches, but he and his family were not religious people so he sent his sons to this Chinese school community for making friends. He also mentioned that this Chinese school was the “right” social place for his sons to find friends with similar cultural backgrounds because he experienced a certain level of discrimination or racism while living in this city. He explained:

“Because we don’t have any religious belief at home, so we do not go to the church at all. Besides the school, you want to spend your social life, you go to participate the community activities. So Chinese school is one of good opportunities for them to network. Chinese and people from western culture are different. Ways of discrimination are existing although it is not in major population you know, but I can sense it, you know, even from my work. The situation for the life has already changed. For children, I want them to be able to deal with friendly or rough people.”

Carol indicated that it (transracial adoption) is not a perfect arrangement because people can tell that this family is different by seeing their faces, their skin colours, and their names. She realizes that her daughter will experience being different her whole life so she tries to find a place where her daughter can feel less different from other kids. In this Chinese school environment, her daughter can play with kids who have similar Chinese looking faces, and some of them also have white parents. Though Carol is not sure if her daughter will fit into this Chinese community, she still wants to provide her daughter many opportunities to connect with Chinese culture, language and people. Her statement was:

“For example, let’s say when she goes to University of X province. People assume she is Chinese, right, when people look at her, do they expect her at least speak Mandarin or Cantonese? Or they start talking to her, you know. I don’t expect that she will become fluent in Mandarin speaker. If she’s able to communicate

with them? If she’s going to feel awkward? In her own country that she can’t...you know there’s expectation and she is not meeting that expectation if she doesn’t have language and culture knowledge. ....You know my daughter is Chinese looking girl, and when she says her name, which is a Canadian name, you know as soon as she says her names, people will go, “it’s very strange!””

Carol hoped that putting her daughter in this Chinese school would make her feel less different from other Chinese looking children.

“I think the most important thing is to put her in this about two hundred children that attend school on Saturday morning, just one of the crowd. Chinese person and Chinese kids just become very normal for her. Whole bunch of Chinese people, some of them are adopted, some of them are not, some of them speak Mandarin home, and some of them don’t. So just depend the situation is. It just makes everything a little bit normal for her.”

Therefore, all of these comments are embedded with social, economic, and cultural perspectives in terms of learning Mandarin as a heritage language.

### **Expectation for a heritage language program**

Adam and Bill have similar cultural backgrounds, and they both share similar patterns of lifestyle and child rearing plans. They were both Cantonese speakers though they had Mandarin education when they were in Hong Kong. In everyday life, they had rare opportunities to use Mandarin, instead they mainly spoke to their sons in Cantonese. So they used other mediums to help their sons become familiar with the sound and pronunciation of Mandarin. Adam mentioned:

“Because we are very fluently in Cantonese and then, you know, it’s not hmm..We don’t practice Mandarin at home. But, instead, we try to switch into the DVD with some interesting movies in Mandarin. Therefore, he gets to, you know, he hears that more regularly. That helps

him to remember or understand from the story in the motions, and try to, you know, help him to know another world.”

Since Adam family do not speak Mandarin at home, he knew that learning Mandarin is an additional activity for his son. He explained:

“Mainly, as I said, an opportunity for him to learn, to expose properly, in the right environment for the Chinese language.”

And Bill even mixed up Cantonese and Mandarin as Chinese. He kept saying, “We all speak Chinese at home.” I tried to clarify this because I remembered that he mentioned that he grew up in Hong Kong. The dialogue was:

“Researcher: So the language policy in you family?”

Bill: In my family, we communicate in Chinese.

Researcher: Chinese or Cantonese?”

Bill: Cantonese...yeah! Because I live with my mother- and father-in-law. That older generation they only speak Chinese....the language Cantonese. So the kids can keep that language skill.”

Also, due to the limited learning time, three of my participants did not expect too much from this heritage language program. Bill mentioned:

“...one thing I don’t like this program is too many day-off on the Saturdays. I think we start on September to early June. There are only about 30 days of class. So that’s not really enough. They should rethink about not to have too many day-off because for language, you really need to pay all the time.”

And Carol also pointed out:

“I mean 3 hours a week. I don’t think she can learn any language in 3 hours a week. I guess it’s 2 and half hours a week. If you study full-time, I think you can certainly learn a language, especially at young age. It’s easily to pick up language when you study full time. I don’t think that 2 and half hours a week is enough for her. I think she will get some basic conversation, she will recognize some

characters.” Carol encountered different challenges from Adam and Bill mainly because she was a non-Chinese heritage mother. She became a minority when she took her daughter to these heritage-learning activities.

“...what I have overcome, I guess, it’s as we try to participate in these activities, I have to overcome feeling of being the minority, and going to places where normally not speaking English, which is very unusual for me. I have I guess very shelter life living in X city. And you know, such as going to a room at Chinese school. We participate in dance classes where all parents were standing around and talking. I had to be brave and go up to the group and stand with them and wait until they switch to English so that I can participate. And I am very often being the only Caucasian person in a room. And that’s very different for me. I don’t have that experience before so it’s been good for me to experience that because my daughter is going to experience. Because of living in X city, she will be going to classroom and she will be going to activities and she will be the only Asian person there. And she is going to deal with being different one.”

Since Carol had no Chinese heritage, it would be difficult for her to supervise her daughter in learning Chinese. She cannot correct her daughter’s pronunciation, or give her help in her Chinese assignments. However, she bought bilingual (English-Chinese) books, CDs, DVDs for her daughter when she was young, and spent lots of time reading these books, listening to CDs, and watching DVDs with her daughter.

“I bought some CDs and some DVDs. It’s a series designed for children who do not speak Mandarin at home. So we bought those. And she enjoys watching them and we listen in the car...To learn all that just by listening and watching the CDs and DVDs. So she got very basic, she knows some food, names of fruit, she can count... So she has

some exposure. I want her to hear the intonation, because I read that there is a window of language acquisition that you have to hear it from times you were a child. That is so much easier to learn a language and speak the words correctly if you heard. So I just let her to have exposure to hearing the language. She seems to pick up something.”

And Carol and her husband started an adult Chinese class this September, and right now they learn Chinese as a family activity. Carol mentioned that it was so challenging for them to learn Mandarin, but they had to try because they wanted their daughter to know that they valued her heritage and it was so important to learn and keep her heritage.

“We are struggling. We have really tough time with it. But the reason we do it is to show our daughter that something we value and important for us, too. That’s important to our family.”

Resources for heritage language retention All of three participants pointed out similar resources that they found for heritage language learning, such as books, CDs, DVDs, satellite TV. Bill mentioned:

“I have Chinese cable. So they can watch Chinese TV all the time, lots of Chinese programs.... So there are Taiwanese, Chinese, and Hong Kong Cantonese programs. I think there is a channel from Taiwan so they can watch whatever is playing. It’s really easy to access. Compared to the old day, the only way in X city, you wanted to access the Chinese stuff, you could rent a VCR. That was in old day. It wasn’t very convenient. And you know, besides the Chinese TV, kids can go to Internet to watch Chinese video as well. Or they can listen to the Chinese music.”

Bill also pointed out that using the Internet was another good way to learn a language, and the advantage is that you can learn by yourself at any time.

“I don’t know about the Chinese program on the Internet. But you know language, for French or English, there are lots of program on

the Internet. Even in Canada, the Chinese population is large now. The major Chinese communities probably can work together. The system from Taiwan, Hong Kong, China, or Singapore, they should try to build some universal program. So people can learn Chinese from anywhere on the Internet.... people can learn by themselves in holidays or evenings. They can use Internet and learn some more stuff.”

## Discussion

Based on the research questions, three major themes emerged from the findings. They were 1) the value of learning Mandarin as a heritage language; 2) the challenges in helping children learn their heritage language, and 3) the resources for heritage language retention.

### The value of learning Mandarin as a heritage language

The value of learning Mandarin as a heritage language for the three participants lies on its social, cultural and economic considerations. All three participants in this study strongly agreed with the social function of learning Mandarin in this Chinese school community. For the first two participants (Adam and Bill), due to their Chinese heritage, participating in this Chinese school community has been of benefit not only for their children, but also for themselves. Through sending their children to this school, they had met other parents who have similar cultural and linguistic backgrounds. They can share information and be supportive within this Chinese community. Therefore, the heritage school is an ideal place for minority language groups to enact their social practice. For non-Chinese heritage parents, they may find families with similar background in this school community and being minority (non-heritage parents) in this school setting provides them with a sympathetic connection with their children.

Cultural value was assumed to be the major reason that parents send their children to a heritage program, though the first two participants (Adam and Bill) seem to put cultural value of learning heritage

language behind its economic value. However, it could not be denied that both of the fathers had strong a cultural identity themselves, and that they wanted their next generation to maintain this cultural identity. According to Schieffelin and Ochs (1986), there is an interrelationship between children's acquisition of language and their acquisition of culture. Sending children to this heritage language program would provide them with the opportunity to practice the target language in culturally specific ways. The social interactions within this Chinese school context are embedded in a broader patterns of social behavior and cultural knowledge. All three participants recognized that with Chinese language ability, their children have easy access to this language group and can use that access to keep their Chinese root (heritage).

All participants brought up the economic value of learning an extra language. Being bilingual or multilingual was recognized as carrying personal advantages as well as important potential benefits to society (Tse, 2001). The perception held by the three parent participants was that additional language ability would expand their children's career development in the future. One participant responded that China will play an important role in the world economic stage in the near future. Therefore, it seems very practical and a privilege to learn Chinese and possess Chinese heritage.

Another issue brought out by the two fathers (Adam and Bill) who were Cantonese speakers was that both of them sent their children to this Chinese school to learn Mandarin and simplified Chinese characters as their heritage language. They all mentioned to me that they knew there was a Cantonese school in X city, but their choice was to make their children learn Mandarin instead. It seemed to reflect the economic considerations mentioned above. They predicted a promising political and economic situation in China and this motivated them to put their

children in this kind of arrangement.

### **The challenges in helping children learn their heritage language**

The challenges for the three participants were all directed towards how to maintain their children interests in heritage language learning. From the parents' perspectives, maintaining heritage culture and language would be a benefit to their children socially, culturally and economically. However, most parents' roles are to encourage their children to learn heritage culture and language. When children become more mature, they may eventually decide what they want to learn and who they want to be in terms of being a minority language group in a host country. You (2005) as a teacher and the principal in a Korean heritage language school in America, mentions that when children are young, they tend to accept many learning activities that parents arrange for them. Once they grow up to teen age, they might not be so obedient. So the climax drop rate in heritage language program is when these young learners become teenagers. One of my participants (Carol) realized this process and mentioned this to me. However, the other two father participants (Adam and Bill) seemed to neglect the fact that children might have their own desire when they became mature, especially considering that their children were educated in a Western educational system. In traditional Chinese culture, parents have more power to assign or direct their children's decisions. So there might be some conflicts between immigrant parents and their children who were educated in different school systems. (Tigchelaar, 2003). Another challenge was related to this community-based heritage language school. This school offered limited learning time—two and half hours a week. It was not enough to be fluent speakers in a language unless students use this language at home as well. But this was not the case for my three participants. Adam and Bill were Cantonese speakers and they spoke mostly Cantonese and some English at home. The third interviewee, Carol was a non-Chinese heritage parent so they only spoke English at home. Students whose home languages are not Mandarin Chi-

nese might have only two and half hours in learning Chinese every week. They might have no Chinese-speaking environment outside of classroom because the dominant language in this city is English. It seems like they are learning a foreign language instead of a heritage language. Therefore, the three parent participants did not expect that their children would become fluent Mandarin speakers after this program due to the limited class time and space to practice the target language. Resources for heritage language retention Resources like bilingual CDs, DVDs, and books, may help parents who did not understand Mandarin at all. For parents like Adam and Bill whose mother tongue was Cantonese or those with other dialects from China, cable TV programs would be a good resource for culture and language learning. Besides, using an online language-learning program or the Internet was another way to practice language as well. So technology development not only assists people from different cultures to interact with each other, but also maintains contacts with people from similar cultural backgrounds.

Parents' knowledge of the resources for heritage language retention in this city was very limited. The three participants had no clue about this part, but they all referred me to the possibilities of rich resources in bigger cities with large Chinese population, such as Toronto and Vancouver. Support from government or mainstream society under the terms of Canadian multiculturalism was very important in terms of heritage language retention. The statement from the X province government website showed that heritage language education is a part of X province educational system. So far the regular school system offers basic heritage language courses, bilingual heritage language programs, and enhanced heritage language courses, though the website does not point out any specific school division with any heritage language programs. It seems that three of my participants do not share these supports from government. There might be some geographic and demographic disadvantages related to this issue.

## FEATURES

### Conclusion

Parental decisions in heritage language retention are very crucial and necessarily. In this study, I focus on three parents' perspectives and the challenges they encountered when they sent their children to a heritage language program. Two of three participants had similar cultural and language backgrounds, and one participant was a non-Chinese heritage parent. The findings show some differences between heritage parents and the non-heritage parent. However, the social, cultural and economic values of learning Mandarin are the three major considerations in attending this community-based Chinese heritage school. It also appears that the challenges parents faced when sending their children to a heritage language program involved uncertainty and frustration. What can they actually expect from this program within a limited language learning time? How can they help besides sending their children to a heritage language program? Another aspect is the availability of resources for heritage language retention at the personal level, community level, societal level, and government level. The findings indicate that resources from mainstream society and the government seem very limited and unapproachable in this province. Under the terms of Canadian multiculturalism, how heritage language resources can be fairly shared with different minority language groups still remains an uncertainty. We also need to consider the development of community-based heritage language programs not only from the educational viewpoint, but also from that of parents' expectations.

This study may shed light on minority parent's perspectives on heritage language retention and the challenges they face when sending their children to a heritage program. It also implicates the policy makers and mainstream society should be more aware of the issue of heritage programs. The current X province educational system includes heritage programs in their curriculum planning, so in any future studies I would like to explore how these language minority groups actually use it.

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# Potential impacts of one-parent-one-language principle on immigrant children's ethnic identity development

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## ABSTRACT

The one parent-one language principle (OPOLP) has been advocated for immigrant children's heritage language (HL) maintenance and second language acquisition (Döpke, 1992). HL refers to immigrants' or their ancestors' mother tongues (Cummins, 2005). HL maintenance refers to the ability to use or continue using one's mother tongue in a bilingual or multilingual context (Richards, Platte & Platte, 1992). However, less attention has been given to potentially negative influences of the OPOLP on children's ethnic identity construction. To address this gap, this paper attempts to challenge the OPOLP from the social perspective. First, relevant literature will be briefly overviewed. Second, the potentially negative impacts of implementing this approach on children's ethnic identity construction and HL maintenance in two scenarios will be discussed. Finally, recommendations for facilitating bilingual development and ethnic identity construction will be offered.

**Keywords:** Heritage language maintenance, the One parent-One language principle, Ethnic identity

## INTRODUCTION

The demographic makeup of many countries is rapidly changing due to immigration. Many people all over the world settle in a different country, hoping to find better employment and educational opportunities, to name a few. Settling in another country in many cases requires learning an additional language, that is, the dominant language of the host country, for educational, social, and economic purposes. At the same time, immigrants' heritage languages (HLs) should be maintained for social (Wong Fillmore, 2000) and personal (Babae, 2010) reasons.

HL refers to immigrants' or their ancestors' mother tongues (Cummins, 2005). Heritage language maintenance refers to the ability to use or continue using one's mother tongue in a bilingual or multilingual context (Richards, Platte & Platte, 1992). HL maintenance facilitates communication among family and community members, especially those with no or little competence in a dominant language. This also serves as a means of expressing cultural heritage and ethnic identity (Crystal, 2000). According to Fishman (1989, p. 6), "at every stage, ethnicity is linked to language, whether indexically,

implementationally or symbolically". Language is "the primary index or symbol or register of identity" (Crystal, 2000, p. 39). Perhaps that is why many immigrant children are motivated to maintain their HLs while learning an additional language (Babae, forthcoming). On the other hand, those who had lost their HLs, that is, had not learned it, reported as if a part of their identities were missing (Babae, 2010).

To develop bilingual competence in a dominant and a HL in children especially in bilingual families, the one parent-one language principle (OPOLP) has been recommended by researchers (Bain & Yu 1980; de Houwer 1990; Schlyter 1993; Meisel ed. 1990; Hulk 1996; Paradis & Genesee 1996; Döpke 1997a, 1997b; Schelleter & Sinka 1997).

The idea is that when the parents speak to a child with two different languages, the child can distinguish and differentiate both of the languages and associate each language with the mother or the father. Therefore, he or she can acquire both languages simultaneously with little interference from the other (Döpke, 1998).

Although the OPOLP has proven successful in developing infant bilingualism in some cases (Döpke, 1992), it has been critiqued "as artificial and an unnecessary restriction of the natural interaction between people who speak more than one language" (Döpke, 1998, p. 44). While researchers have critiqued the OPOLP from a linguistic point of view, they have focused less on the potential drawbacks of this principle from a social perspective. Focusing on HL transmitters whose HLs include two different, gender-appropriate varieties and those inadequately proficient in a dominant language, this paper is an attempt to address this gap in the literature. First, relevant literature on the OPOLP will be reviewed. Second, the potentially negative impacts of implementing the OPOLP on children's ethnic identity construction and HL maintenance in two scenarios will be discussed. Finally, recommendations for facilitating bilingual development and ethnic identity construction will be offered

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Historical and Contemporary Studies on the OPOLP

The implementation of the OPOLP in developing infant bilingualism has been investigated for almost a century. The

earliest recorded case of a young child, associating a different language with each of his parents was that of Ronjat. Louis Ronjat and his parents lived in Southern France. His mother spoke German to him and his father addressed him in French. In front of Louis, and for his benefit, and also because German was a HL in France, the parents spoke German to each other. Ronjat was a linguist and kept a diary of his son's language developments in German and French until he was five years old (Ronjat, 1913). The analysis of his language developments showed that Louis spoke both languages like monolingual children in France and Germany at the end of this period (Döpke, 1992).

Following Ronjat (1913), linguist (for example, Kravin, 1992) and non-linguist (Döpke, 1998; Döpke, 1992) parents attempted to investigate the impact of the OPOLP on children's bilingual development. These studies tend to indicate that implementing the OPOLP might lead to bilingual development in children.

### CRITICISMS OF THE OPOLP

While the OPOLP has proven successful in childhood bilingual development in some studies, it has been criticized for not automatically guaranteeing bilingual development (Döpke, 1998). Research suggests that under the OPOL condition, children might achieve passive competence in a HL (for example, Yamamoto, 1995).

Moreover, the supporters of the OPOLP believe that parents should try to keep the two languages separate and should avoid code switching and code mixing in front of the child so that he or she will not mix the two languages (Döpke, 1998). However, some scholars claim that code mixing and code switching is a natural aspect of the communication of bilingual people, and that the OPOLP is not necessarily a prerequisite for bilingual development because children continue to grow up to become competent bilinguals around the world (Lyon, 1996).

The above mentioned researchers have critiqued the OPOLP from a linguistic point of view; however, a closer examination of this principle from other perspectives is called for to shed more light on the childhood bilingual development. This paper aims to address this gap in the literature by critiquing the OPOLP from a social perspective and its potentially negative influences in immigrant children's ethnic identity formation.

### THE OPOLP AND ETHNIC IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION

Although the OPOLP tends to facilitate bilingual development, it might pose challenges to immigrant children in ethnic identity construction, which are pointed out below.

Some languages have two varieties for male and female speakers. In Japanese for instance, "women's and men's speech exhibit somewhat different phonological properties" (Shibamoto Smith, 2003, p. 203). As a case in point, women and men use different suffixes and pronouns. For instance, "I am is translated into Japanese as *Boku wa* (male) and *Atashi wa* (female)" (a Japanese native speaker, personal communication,

June 2012). Therefore, in bilingual families where the mother speaks Japanese, if the son is only exposed to the female version of Japanese, he will acquire it, which is gender-inappropriate in this case. Thus, the boy might be humiliated when he communicates with his peers who speak the male version of Japanese. As a result, the child may feel insecure or unwilling to use his HL to communicate with his peers or other community members. Moreover, since HL and ethnic identity are intertwined, the inability to use his HL appropriately might pose a challenge in ethnic identity formation for the humiliated child. This might also be applied to girls who are taught Japanese by their fathers under the OPOLP.

Another potential challenge with the OPOLP pertains to immigrant parents who speak in their HLs with their children and are inadequately proficient in the dominant language of a host society. In cases where the inadequate proficiency in the dominant language limits immigrant parents' communication with dominant language speakers, many of them opt for socializing with their community members and working in their communities where they need to use the dominant language little. Their children, however, might feel embarrassed in front of their dominant language-speaking peers or teachers due to their parents' inadequate skills in the dominant language when they, that is, the parents, encounter the children's friends or teachers at school. This may lead to a feeling of resistance to maintain a HL as it might be viewed by the children as a primary reason for the failure to communicate with dominant language-speakers. On the other hand, children might assign more value to the dominant language because it, as they perceive, facilitates communication with people in the broader context. Resistance to HL maintenance, in turn, might pose a challenge to the child's communication with his or her parent and other HL speakers incompetent in the dominant language. This might also impede ethnic identity construction for the child because, as mentioned earlier, HL maintenance and ethnic identity are intertwined.

### CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

While immigrant children need to learn a host society's dominant language(s) for educational, social and economic reasons, they should maintain their HLs. Research suggests that HL maintenance tends to facilitate ethnic identity construction and communication with family and community members, especially those incompetent in the dominant language.

Advocates of the OPOLP argue that this principle facilitates bilingual development in children by exposing them to two languages since childhood. However, a closer examination of the OPOLP from a social perspective reveals that it might have negative impacts on immigrant children's ethnic identity construction in cases where two varieties for female and male speakers of a HL exists and where the HL transmitter is

In spite of the criticisms on the OPOLP, this principal might facilitate HL maintenance and ethnic identity construction based on the recommendations discussed in this section. In bilingual families where two varieties of a HL exist, while a parent uses a dominant language to interact with a child, the HL transmitter can expose him or her to both versions from the beginning of HL acquisition and before he or she starts to produce the HL. This might happen through watching TV programs and films and interacting with female and male children and adult speakers of the HL if present. Moreover, at this stage, the HL transmitter could use the variety which is appropriate for the child in terms of gender while speaking to him or her, instead of the version appropriate for him/herself. After the child starts to make utterances in the HL, the HL transmitter might correct his or her gender-inappropriate statements and ask him or her to repeat and use correct forms. The child might gradually realize different varieties of the HL and associate each with the appropriate gender. In addition, because he or she uses the gender-appropriate variety of the HL, he or she will not be humiliated by his HL-speaking peers; therefore, his or her ethnic identity formation might not be impeded.

HL transmitters who are inadequately competent in a dominant language could try to engage their children in various cultural and fun activities such as ceremonies and festivals in their communities and encourage them to use HLs to communicate with HL speakers. Children might be encouraged to maintain their HLs if they perceive themselves as members of their ethnic communities and realize that speaking HLs facilitates communication with other group members. HL maintenance and participation in ethnic group activities might facilitate ethnic identity formation for them as well. Moreover, children might see their HL transmitting parents as a native HL-speaking model hence in a position of power within their ethnic communities, instead of a non-dominant language speaker who tends to fail to communicate with dominant language-speaking people in society. While the child learns a dominant language by interacting with one of his or her parents, he or she tends to learn his or her HL by interacting with the other parent.

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## Writing activity - Using Pictures

By Eunhee Buettner

The objective of using pictures for writing exercises is to make students practice making a story about pictures by using different tenses, sequencing sentences and putting conjunctions between them. In this activity box, four writing activities are introduced; brainstorming, narrating pictures with present tense, writing a story about the pictures with past tense and future tense through students' imagination and also sequencing. These activities provide students many opportunities to practice writing. Furthermore, it is very effective for intermediate level students to improve their writing to a commendable level.

The first activity is brainstorming where students write down their thoughts about the picture they receive. More specifically, each student will get a picture and write down any vocabulary and/or expressions which come to their mind when they see the picture. The purpose of this activity is to gather ideas before actual writing. Each student is going to brainstorm about the picture individually.

After brainstorming, students are required to write one paragraph of narration about the picture by using the present tense. Each student is going to imagine what happens in the picture carefully and write what they think about the picture in one solid paragraph.

The third activity is to extend the story which they already made with the present tense by using the past and the future tense. The aim of the activity is to get students to practice writing stories using different tenses such as the past and the future tense. Through this activity, students can practice writing in different tenses. Students are asked to write only three sentences for each story with the past and the future tense. That is, they are going to imagine what happened and what will happen looking at the

picture and write three sentences for the past and the future.

The fourth activity is to sequence by putting conjunctions between the sentences and paragraphs in order to make a complete story about the picture. A goal of this activity is to practice writing a story coherently. Students are divided into groups of four. Each group has to make stories which present the past, the present and the future by putting their sentences together. For instance, one group would have twelve sentences about the past and twelve sentences about the future. They are going to put those sentences together to make one paragraph about what happened and what will happen. If some of the sentences are similar, they use only one of those sentences. They are allowed to slightly change the sentences for a complete paragraph if necessary. After that, each group should have six paragraphs which present the picture such as one paragraph about the past, four paragraphs about the present that each student wrote individually in the second activity and one paragraph about the future. Finally, each group exchanges their six paragraphs and makes a complete story in order by using conjunctions for coherence.

These four activities help students to improve their writing through practicing many important writing skills such as brainstorming, narrating, using different tenses for writing and sequencing. In addition, students can practice a writing process through these four activities. To be specific, they plan what they are going to write about by brainstorming, write one narration paragraph and revise by sequencing other groups' writing.

## Sample



Source of picture: <http://www.clker.com/clipart-restaurant-waiter.html>

### Activity 1: Brainstorming

a couple in a restaurant, dinning, ordering food, waiter, anniversary, decisions

### Activity 2: Writing a paragraph of narration using the present tense.

Eunhee and Brian are at the restaurant for their wedding anniversary. Eunhee is trying to decide what to order. Brian and the waiter are trying to help her to decide. Eunhee doesn't like the food at the restaurant so she suggests that they go to a different restaurant. Brian doesn't like Eunhee's idea.

### Activity 3: Extending the story by using the past and the future tense.

#### Past tense sentences

- Eunhee was very excited to celebrate their wedding anniversary.
- Brian made a reservation at a very fancy and expensive restaurant for their 10<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary.
- They got dressed in nice clothes and drove to the restaurant.

#### Future tense sentences

- They will leave the restaurant.
- They will not find a restaurant with available seats.
- They will go home and order pizza

### Activity 4: Sequencing the story.

#### --An example of the past tense paragraph--

Eunhee was very excited to celebrate their 10<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary when she found out that Brian made a reservation at a very fancy and expensive restaurant. They got dressed in nice clothes and drove to the restaurant.