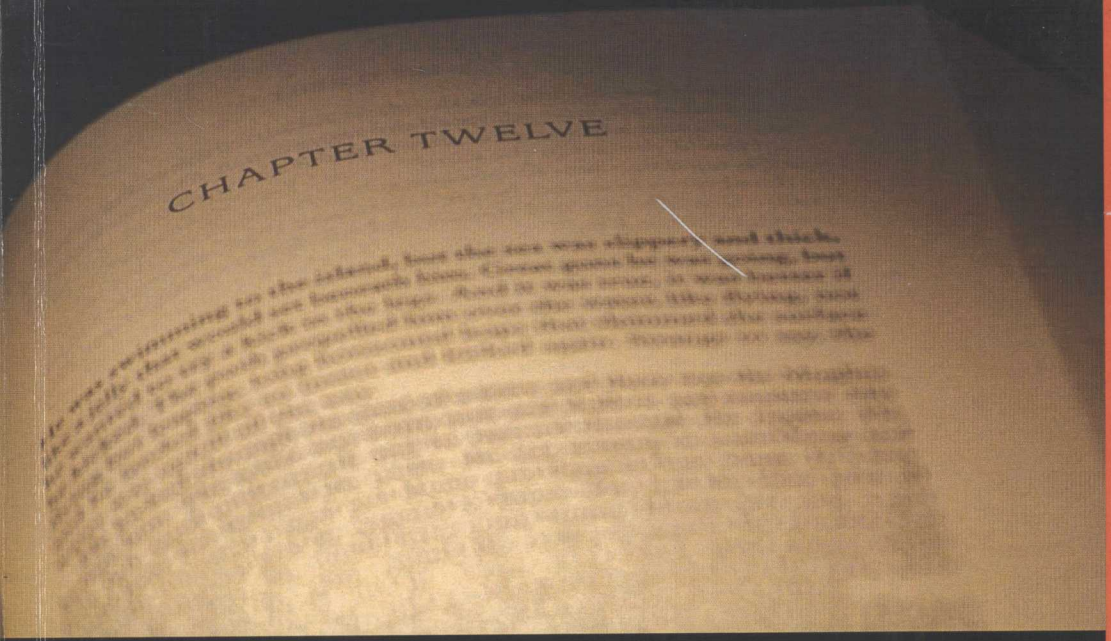

Grace Huey-Yuh Lin

Acculturation and Heritage Language Maintenance

Cultural and Educational Experiences of Chinese Americans

VDM
Verlag Dr. Müller

Grace Huey-Yuh Lin

Acculturation and Heritage Language Maintenance

Cultural and Educational Experiences of Chinese Americans

VDM Verlag Dr. Müller

Imprint

Bibliographic information by the German National Library: The German National Library lists this publication at the German National Bibliography; detailed bibliographic information is available on the Internet at
http://dnb.d-nb.de.

Cover image: www.purestockx.com

Published 2008 Saarbrücken

Publisher:
VDM Verlag Dr. Müller Aktiengesellschaft & Co. KG, Dudweiler Landstr. 125 a,
66123 Saarbrücken, Germany,
Phone +49 681 9100-698, Fax +49 681 9100-988,
Email: info@vdm-verlag.de
Zugl.: Houston, University of Houston, 2007

Produced in Germany by:
Reha GmbH, Dudweilerstrasse 72, D-66111 Saarbrücken
Schaltungsdienst Lange o.H.G., Zehrensdorfer Str. 11, 12277 Berlin, Germany
Books on Demand GmbH, Gutenbergring 53, 22848 Norderstedt, Germany

Impressum

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek: Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über http://dnb.d-nb.de abrufbar.

Coverbild: www.purestockx.com

Erscheinungsjahr: 2008
Erscheinungsort: Saarbrücken

Verlag: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller Aktiengesellschaft & Co. KG, Dudweiler Landstr. 125 a,
D- 66123 Saarbrücken,
Telefon +49 681 9100-698, Telefax +49 681 9100-988,
Email: info@vdm-verlag.de
Zugl.: Houston, University of Houston, 2007

Herstellung in Deutschland:
Schaltungsdienst Lange o.H.G., Zehrensdorfer Str. 11, D-12277 Berlin
Books on Demand GmbH, Gutenbergring 53, D-22848 Norderstedt
Reha GmbH, Dudweilerstrasse 72, D-66111 Saarbrücken

ISBN: 978-3-639-01882-0

Grace Huey-Yuh Lin

Acculturation and Heritage Language Maintenance

Acknowledgments

Writing this book has been a meaningful experience for me as an educational researcher and as an immigrant in this host country. I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to a number of individuals for their assistance in the completion of this work.

First, I would like to thank Dr. Irma N. Guadarrama for her careful guidance throughout this project and continuing support. Dr. Guadarrama helped me open my visions to the salient issues of bilingual/multicultural education. I thank Dr. Cheryl J. Craig for her precious advice in the research design and data analysis throughout this program. Her assistance granted me opportunities to learn from her and start realizing the real essence of becoming an educational researcher. I also sincerely appreciate her kindness in editing my book. I thank Dr. Allen R. Warner for his valuable suggestions during this writing process. He had always been there and ready to help. Dr. Warner taught me to appreciate what it meant to be a professional educator from the Western perspectives. I thank Dr. Yali Zou for her constructive comments throughout this project. Her insights regarding the role of the individual's heritage language and culture in the global education helped open my eyes to this essential issue.

I am particularly indebted to Dr. Valentina Hardin, friend, for her support during this writing process. She inspired me to believe in my academic competence as an educator in the Western world. I am truly grateful to Chih-Ling Tang, friend, for her assistance in the preparation of portions of this manuscript.

I would like to dedicate this book to the second generation Chinese American immigrants and their parents who participated in this research study. Without their willingness to share their real-life experiences and stories, this research study would have never been completed. I dedicate this book to them and to all other immigrants who explore their cultural roots and have strength and confidence in their senses of connection with their origins of cultures. I also dedicate this book to their parents who have courage and resilience to leave their native land and endeavor to raise their offspring in the new territory.

Finally, I owe specific thanks to my husband, Dr. Tien-Sheng Lin, and my son, Albert Lin and all my family members. Without their support, patience, and understanding, the completion of this book would have been impossible.

Zai ci chengzhi di xiexie nimen.

在此誠摯地謝謝您們!

Table of Contents

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

The United States of America (美國), in Chinese, is referred to as a beautiful country. It is the land for many Chinese immigrants to come to search for better educational opportunities and quality living conditions. However, once arriving in this host country, these language minority immigrants may face many challenges and problems they never confront in their native land. In the intercultural contact, they may find themselves encountering conflicts related to cultural changes, various belief systems, new rules of conducts, concepts of self and others, communication patterns and very often the prejudice they need to overcome because of their linguistic and cultural differences (Brown, 1986; Delgado-Gaitan & Trueba, 1991; Trueba, Jacobs & Kirton, 1990). Being unfamiliar with the cultural knowledge and typical behavior of the new society can frequently hinder their adjustment.

During the process of acculturation, language minority immigrants face the assimilative pressure from the mainstream society when they strive to adjust from one culture to another. From the very beginning of new life in the U.S., language minority immigrants whose primary dialect is not standard English have to learn this target language and acquire literacy skills for their educational and sociocultural requirements. For these language minority groups, assimilation is a process in which the individual has to entirely take on the aspects of the host culture and leave behind his or her language and culture so that the individual can succeed in the educational institution and the larger society (Ovando & Collier, 1998; Urrieta & Quach, 2000). For many language minority immigrants, learning another language and adjusting to the new society prompts them to re-examine their own cultural heritages and they start asking who they are and how they are related to their important others in their lives (Bosher, 1997; Tong, 1996; Yao, 1983). The concern for ethnic identity and cultural heritages turn into salient parts of their life experiences during the process of acculturation.

From the perspectives of these group members, attitudes toward their primary language, cultural values and ethnicity become the critical conditions in which they adapt their new lives in the U.S. Instead of assimilating, many language minority immigrants see their culture and ethnicity as part of their history, their values and most importantly, part of themselves (Guthrie, 1985; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). For many of these group members,

ethnic identity and cultural heritage are the important resources of values and self-confidence through which they can deal with difficulties and adjust in the new society (Gibson, 1988). When studying the adaptations of language minority immigrants in the U.S., the educators and scholars rarely consider the real-life experiences of these group members in their living environment including the maintenance of their cultural values and traditions, the important conditions of adjustment which are originated from their ethnic identities. The language and identity of language minority immigrants need more studies in order to empower them to succeed in this host country. The individual's heritage language and culture are always related to his or her identity. They involve communication with family members and affiliation in his or her ethnic community (Saville-Troike, 2003). If language minority immigrants are forced to relinquish their language and culture so that they can succeed in the educational institutions and the larger society, they may be ruined psychologically even if they succeed by the mainstream criterion (Chun, 1995).

In the predominantly monolingual American society, the languages and cultures of language minority groups are generally considered to be connected to linguistic and cognitive deficit (Valenzuela, 1999), and often, their languages and cultures seem to be treated as a problem, not a resource (Ruiz, 1984). Assimilating into English language and mainstream culture has been regarded as imperative for language minority groups because they are supposed to improve and benefit from linguistic assimilation into the dominant language and culture (Wiley, 2004). The public expect the minority language speakers to give up their mother tongues and choose English without negotiation of speaking another language. The English-Only movement contends that English needs to be the official and the only language used in the society. Supporters of this movement argue that immigrants should join in rather than stay apart from the mainstream society because English is an important tool for their social upward mobility (Crawford, 1992). Most of the time, the mainstream society attempts to push them to learn English and literacy skills as quickly as possible and does not encourage them to continue their heritage language acquisition. Language minority groups face a dilemma: How can the new country consider their language and cultural traditions as an asset to be developed and maintained but not a deficit? How can the host society regard their maintenance of heritage language and cultural values and bilingual development as facilitating components in their adaptation to the mainstream educational institutions and the larger society during the process of acculturation and not see them simply as interfering factors?

The Need for the Study

While facing such assimilative stress, is it really necessary for language minority immigrants to give up their home language and cultural heritage in order to be accepted by the host country? Is it inevitable for them to reject their own culture in favor of the dominant one in order to survive? What does educational success really suggest? What does the individual's becoming successful in his or her life really suggest? For many language minority immigrants, the primary language is the tool the immigrant parents use to communicate with their offspring and socialize them into their cultural values and beliefs, the fundamental knowledge they think important in their lives. Furthermore, the primary language is the tool language minority immigrant families keep to associate in their ethnic communities. Loss of primary language can cause immigrant families frustrated (Cho & Krashen, 1998; Kouritzin, 1999; McKay & Weinstein-Shr, 1993; Wong Fillmore, 2000). Language minority immigrant families want their offspring to succeed in American schools and the larger society without losing their primary language and culture (Lao, 2004; Pacini-Ketchabaw, Bernhard & Freire, 2001; Shibata, 2000). Educators and scholars rarely ever examine such problems by taking the stand of language minority groups themselves. In the intercultural contact, language minority immigrants face many challenges during the process of developing their bilingual and bicultural ethnic identities. The continuing improvement of the individual's first language becomes an important part in understanding who he or she really is. Therefore, the area of primary language maintenance in language minority immigrants and their offspring needs to be addressed.

Various studies have documented that language minority learner's first language and culture have positive influence on second language learning and adjustment in the new country (Kim, Brenner, Liang & Asay, 2003; Tong, 1997). From the cognitive, academic and affective prospects, the development of primary language has been seen as a critical function in the second language learning and adaptation to the new environment. Based on his construct of Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP), Cummins (1981) suggests that there is an interdependence between first and second languages and cultures and many characteristics are shared across all languages at very deep levels including real life experiences and cultural knowledge. All of these foundations that language minority group members have already cultivated in first language provide the support for the learning process during their school years (Cummins, Swain, Nakajima, Handscombe, Green & Tran, 1984; Cummins & Swain, 1986; Cummins, 1989; Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991; McLaughlin, 1985). In the theory of empowerment, the proponents contend that the primary linguistic and cultural proficiency

provide remarkable cultural capital (Cummins, 1986; Trueba & Zou, 1994; Trueba, 2002). They advocate that by means of such cultural capital, educators should help language minority immigrant students develop their potentials and succeed in their lives.

Recently, more researchers and scholars in education have become aware of the connections between primary language capacities and cultural knowledge of language minority groups and their learning experiences. The integrity of such access to the education of language minority students (Genesee, 2000) focuses on the inclusion of their linguistic and cultural origins. Language minority groups need to transfer their life experiences and learned skills from first language and culture to second language learning, it is essential for the mainstream educational institutions and the larger society to value and support their home language maintenance and bilingual development and second language acquisition (Trueba, Cheng & Ima, 1993).

The Population Studied

According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, Asian Americans are the fastest growing ethnic group in the United States, about 11.9 million Asians, representing 4.2 percent of the nation (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000). Among this group, Chinese Americans is the largest subgroup. There are 2.3 million people who reported Chinese and an additional 0.4 million people who reported Chinese with at least one other Asian group. In 2000, Chinese Americans made up 23 percent of the entire Asian populations (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000). Chinese Americans are becoming an emerging ethnic group in the United States. Few studies of second generation Chinese American immigrants have focused on the research area of bilingual development and adjustment to life in the new society. The primary language maintenance of second generation Chinese American immigrants in their living environment is an important area of study and needs to be addressed in order to have understanding of these groups' complex educational experiences during the process of acculturation.

Statement of the Problem

The individual's primary language and culture are always related to his or her identity. Most of the studies concerning with the education of language minority immigrants have focused on the relationship between the first language and second language and the effect of the first language on the second language acquisition (Chikamatsu, 2006; Paribakht, 2005; Upton & Lee-Thompson, 2001). Some studies have focused on the primary language and

heritage culture maintenance (Chen, 1994; Reese & Goldenberg, 2006; Withers, 2004). A few studies have attempted to explore the factors in the living environment that may have contributed to the primary language maintenance and bilingual development by utilizing questionnaire and survey methodology (Schecter, Sharken-Taboada & Bayley, 1996; Schecter & Bayley, 1997; Pacini-Ketchabaw, Bernhard & Freire, 2001; Guardado, 2002). A small number of studies have used questionnaire and survey to examine the primary language maintenance of Asian American groups during the process of acculturation (Feuerverger, 1991; Cho, 2000). There have been very few qualitative studies that attempt to explore the individuals' experiences of Chinese American immigrants while they endeavor to improve home language and culture maintenance and strive to adapt to the host country (Chan, 2003; He, 1998)

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to explore how the socialization experiences of second generation Chinese American immigrants support and encourage them to maintain their primary language, culture and ethnic identity in their environment during the process of acculturation. This study is to examine why second generation Chinese American immigrants continue to strive for maintenance of their primary language. Particularly, the study is to investigate the factors that cause the primary language maintenance and bilingual development, how the immigrant parents contribute to the primary language maintenance in their living environment, how second generation Chinese American immigrants adapt to the mainstream educational institutions and the larger society while maintaining their primary language, culture and ethnic identity.

Research Questions

This study was designed to address the following research questions:

1. How do the socialization experiences of second generation Chinese American immigrants foster maintenance of their primary language in their environment during the process of acculturation?
2. Why do second generation Chinese American immigrants continue to maintain their primary language in their environment during the process of acculturation?
3. How do second generation Chinese American immigrants adapt to the mainstream educational institutions and the larger society while maintaining their primary language, culture, and ethnic identity?

Theoretical Rationale of the Study

The theoretical framework for the study of language maintenance among second generation Chinese American immigrants during the process of acculturation has been based on the work of Fishman (1966, 1976, 1989, 1991), Veltman (1983) and Wong (1988). These studies point out that when language minority immigrant group members start learning in the mainstream institutions, they shift to acquiring the dominant language of the new country and discontinue maintaining and developing competence in their mother tongues (Fishman, 1966, 1976, 1989, 1991; Hakuta, 1986). The analyses of the research have shown that many minority immigrant or other ethnic group members shift to the native language of the majority population and become assimilated into the mainstream society, concurrently, give up their primary language and cultural heritage rapidly. The course of language loss is usually ended within a few generations (Veltman, 1983). Wong documents that language shift to the dominant language is evident and the shift to English is taking place at a fast rate in the Chinese American community (1988). Nevertheless, the studies have also identified factors that influence the retention of the primary language among language minority immigrants. Veltman (1983) observes that foreign born parents in the Portuguese, Chinese and Greek language groups have maintained the use of their mother tongues to a more remarkable range than parents from other minority language groups. Veltman (1981, 1983) argues that birth locality and language behavior of immigrant parents are the key elements in supporting primary language maintenance. Wong (1988) indicates that language maintenance has been related to the continued influx of new Chinese-speaking immigrants. According to Wong, the great influx of Chinese immigrants increases the number of native Chinese among Chinese Americans in the United States, the number of Chinese-speaking Chinese Americans, and the tendency to maintain it. The studies reveal that institutional resources available support primary language maintenance including ethnic language schools, religious services in the primary language, television programs, radio broadcasting stations, videotapes, newspapers and primary language publications (Clyne & Kipp, 1999; Fishman, 1966, 1976, 1989; Fishman, 1985). Moreover, the studies show that people from language minority groups and their communities have been intensely committed to maintaining and transmitting their heritage languages to their next generations (Fishman, 1985; Liu, 2005).

Berry's model of acculturation (1992) supports the theoretical framework for understanding the adaptation of language minority immigrant individuals during the process of acculturation. The theory suggests that the acculturation is a complicated phenomenon that involves the process of cultural transformation (Berry, Poortinga, Segall, & Dasen,

1992). By explaining between changes to the dominant culture and changes to the individual's culture of origin, four types of consequences are defined: (1) assimilation – the individual replaces his or her native culture and customs with the culture and customs of the mainstream society (2) separation – the individual chooses not to take on the customs and culture of mainstream society and endeavors to revive native cultural values (3) marginalization – the individual rejects both cultures with no commitment to either his or her cultural values or mainstream cultural values (4) integration / biculturalism – the individual maintains values and customs of his or her native culture and takes on the values and customs of the mainstream society.

Delimitations of the Study

The present study is limited to second generation Chinese American immigrants and their parents. The study includes six participants, 25 years of age and older. The second generation immigrants in this study refer to offspring of Chinese American immigrants born either in the United States or in Taiwan. The second generation Chinese American immigrants who were born, raised, and educated in Taiwan immigrated with their parents to the United States at an early age. Their parents were born, raised, and educated in Taiwan or were born in mainland China, raised, and educated in Taiwan. The study includes participants who are fluent bilinguals in English and Chinese. The participants born in Taiwan also speak Minnanhua, the Taiwanese language.

Significance of the Study

Veltman (1983) has documented the phenomenon of a rapid shift to English among Chinese American immigrant groups in the United States where they come in contact with the dominant cultural groups. He also observes that the Chinese are the most retentive of the non-Spanish groups (Veltman, 1983). Many studies of language minority groups and their language situations have focused on linguistic response to pressure for assimilation and present a number of factors that cause the potentials of language shift rather than the factors that facilitate language maintenance in an immigrant context (Li, 1982; Wei, 1994). The investigator finds that very few studies have been done on Chinese language retention that use narrative inquiry research design regarding the hermeneutic essence of participants' personal experiences and perspectives on the circumstances that have affected primary language maintenance, how their efforts have fostered bilingual and bicultural development in their sociocultural context and how they have dealt with the educational and various social

demands of the mainstream educational institutions and the larger society (Chan, 2003; He, 1998)

Cummins (1989) argues that the incorporation of language minority groups' language and culture into the educational programs will be contributory in the empowerment of language minority learners during the process of acculturation. Understanding the factors in the real-life experiences of language minority immigrants that have affected the maintenance of their primary language and how language minority immigrants and their parents preserve their primary language, culture and ethnic identity is crucial for the educators, administrators, and counselors who concern with the education and well-being of their Chinese American immigrant learners, one of the growing language minority groups in the mainstream educational systems. Realizing how language minority immigrants adapt to the host culture and cope with the educational and sociocultural demands of the mainstream institutions and the larger society while maintaining their primary language, culture, and ethnic identity is possibly to help educators and language professionals become aware of their language minority immigrant learners' long and complicated journey of striving to balance their lives in the new country and improve their pedagogy and educational programs to support their language minority learners when they deal with the language issues and other related educational problems.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

History of the Immigration of Chinese Americans to the United States

The First Period of 1849-1882

The immigration of Chinese to the United States started around the 1850s. From the beginning, Chinese were attracted to North America by the Gold Rush that started at Sutter's Mill, Sacramento, California (Miscevic & Kwong, 2000). During this period, Southern China encountered extreme political and economic instability because of the feebleness of the Qing Dynasty regime. There were internal uprisings and external trouble including the Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864), the Red Turban Revolt (1854-1864), and the devastating Opium Wars (1839-1842). Consequently, thousands of young Chinese peasants left their rural villages in Guangdong province and moved to America. By the year 1851, there were twenty-five thousand Chinese immigrants working in California. Most of them, unskilled contract laborers, worked for very little pay and lived in the rural mining camps and near San Francisco area (Chan, 1991).

Chinese immigrants came to the United States primarily seeking work opportunity and earning a living. They hoped they could send money back to their homes or return to China where they could improve their lives. Most of them worked hard. They were willing to work as a group. According to Chang (2003), when a group of Chinese miners worked in northern central California and recognized that there was a rich vein lying below the riverbed, they worked together to make a dam across the Yuba River to cast out the gold. After the gold rush, some of the Chinese immigrants set up their own factories. The others worked in labor areas such as agriculture, irrigation, metals, minerals and lumber industry. They developed the fishing industry, restored the swamplands, and particularly, helped build the Central Pacific Railroad from 1864 to 1869.

Satisfied by the productiveness of Chinese workers, the Central Pacific Railroad officials became eager supporters of Chinese immigration to California. They printed flyers and sent recruiters to China, particularly, the Guangdong Province, to get more workers. In 1868, China and the American government signed the Burlingame Treaty (Chang, 2003). The Treaty encouraged the Chinese to emigrate to the United States. Chinese workers joined the labor force that supported developing American economic foundation. By 1870s, the Chinese were 8.6 percent of the total population of California and made 25 percent of the labor force. However, as the American economy was slow, the Chinese labor force turned into a threat to