

Heritage Language Maintenance and Development among Asian Immigrant Families in Canada

by

Mina Hong

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## **Supervisory Committee**

Dr. Wolff-Michael Roth - Supervisor  
(Department of Curriculum and Instruction)

Dr. Robert Anthony – 2nd reader  
(Department of Curriculum and Instruction)

## **Abstract**

A majority of Canada's population consists of people from diverse ethnic, linguistic, and religious backgrounds. As the number of immigrants and refugees from non-English or French speaking regions has increased recently, the study of their linguistic adaptation and cultural adjustment has become relevant to national interest and is beginning to attract the attention of researchers. This project reviews heritage language maintenance and development among Korean, Chinese, and Japanese immigrant families in the Canadian context. There are both similarities and differences in the experiences with regard to their efforts to retain heritage language: whereas Asian immigrant families across the three ethnic groups are reported to actively support their children's heritage language maintenance overall, the degree of their involvement and focal points for heritage language education are found to differ owing to linguistic characteristics, family environment, and absence or existence of stable ethnic communities in a larger society.

## **Introduction**

Canada is a land of immigrants. The majority of the nation's population is composed of people from diverse ethnic, linguistic, and religious backgrounds. British and French heritage have predominated and constitute the most influential cultures, however, the ethnic population of Canada is changing (CIC, 2008). The number of immigrants and refugees from Asia, Africa, and South America has gradually increased in recent years whereas the proportion of immigrants from the U.K, Ireland, and other European countries has decreased (Jeon, 2012). The increased immigrant population from historically and currently non-English or French speaking regions contributes to both linguistic and cultural diversities in Canada. Consequently, the study of linguistic adjustment and cultural adaptation of various immigrant groups in the Canadian context is relevant to the national interest and it is appropriate that it should attract the attention of researchers. Researchers have examined those immigrants' maintenance and development of heritage language (HL), which refers to languages other than the official languages (English and French) or Indigenous languages in Canada (Cummins, 1992). In Canada, those immigrants are recognised as visible minorities; persons with non-European ethnic heritages, including Chinese, South Asians, Blacks, Arabs/West Asians, Filipinos, Japanese, Korean and others (Kaida, Sano & Tenkorang, 2015). Notwithstanding linguistic diversity in Canada, English and French are still the dominant languages within the school curriculum and in the larger society. As a result, once immigrant children start formal schooling, the likelihood of their speaking one of Canada's official languages increases. Accordingly, immigrants may experience language shifts from heritage languages (HL) to one of the dominant official languages (Duff & Li, 2009). Language shift is defined as the gradual displacement of one language by another in the lives of the community members manifested as loss in number of speakers, level of proficiency, or range of

functional use of the language (Hornberger, 2012). To illustrate, young members in immigrant families are likely to lose their HL in a short period of time during the early years of formal schooling, when they are exclusively exposed to dominant language in the host society. Subsequently, a majority of them struggle with maintaining competence in their heritage language, which often leads to language shifts. Language shift then contributes to language loss, which denotes little competence or no competence in one's language (Cho, 2000). The loss of heritage language is a significant issue, as it may lead to failure of HL maintenance and promotion in the family as well as leading to disconnection from the ethnic community (Kaida et al, 2015; Sakamoto, 2006). For example, Korean immigrant youths who have experienced HL loss mention that they avoid engaging with their ethnic community by not picking up the home phone in case their parents' co-ethnic friends or acquaintances that are likely to speak the heritage language might call. They have also expressed a reluctance to travel to the homeland, where people expect them to communicate in their ethnic language (Cho, 2008). Likewise, Wong (1997) finds that immigrant children's HL loss often leads to failure to establish rapport in the family and this has been blamed for Chinese immigrant children growing up to be disrespectful toward the parents who exhibit low dominant-language proficiency.

My interest in the experiences of HL education and maintenance amongst minorities who migrated from non-European countries developed relatively recently. Previously, during my academic program, I had done preliminary research about heritage language education in B.C., and written a review essay on Korean heritage language maintenance and development in Canada and the U.S. I focused on Korean immigrants for the following reasons: they belong to visible minority in Canada, Korea is a non-English and non-French speaking country, and my own ethnic background, which is Korean. In this previous review, I investigated the questions:

“How do the children and adolescents of Korean immigrants in Canada maintain their ethnic languages and their cultural practices?” “What could be the effective ways of teaching their languages and cultures?” and “How do they negotiate who they are in a multilingual and multicultural society?” From these three inquiries, I learned about parental enthusiasm in the maintenance of their children’s heritage language, Korean immigrant children and youths’ frustration and pressure in learning Korean language, and the lack of societal and institutional support for the maintenance of Korean heritage language.

This paper expands on those findings about Korean immigrants’ ethnic language education and promotion of cultural practices in North America by investigating heritage language maintenance and promotion among Asian immigrant families of Canada. In particular it explores how other Asian immigrants endeavour to maintain HL in Canada. The reason I pinpointed Canadian studies is because I learned that the history of immigration, government policy on multiculturalism, and promotion of linguistic diversity in Canada and the U.S. are vastly different. The current review particularly focuses on Korean, Chinese, and Japanese immigrant population in Canada for two main reasons: (a) They may experience conflicts with cultural values and beliefs in Canada owing to their tendency of strong emphasis on family obligations, cultural practices, ethnicity and the legacy of Confucianism and (b) They are predominantly from non-English or non-French speaking countries. Consequently, they are more likely to experience linguistic barriers, as these three ethnic languages Korean, Chinese, and Japanese are not cognate languages with English. Therefore, their linguistic adaptation may be challenging.

## Method

### Definitions

There are a number of terms in this review that need clarification. *Heritage language* (HL) refers to languages other than the official languages (English and French) or Indigenous languages in Canada (Cummins, 1992). *Ethnic language* is used interchangeably with heritage language. The most general term *Asian immigrants* is used to refer to Korean, Chinese, and Japanese immigrants collectively. *Korean immigrants* specify newcomers from Republic of Korea (South Korea), as I did not find any literature on immigrants from Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea). The expression *Chinese immigrants* denotes all newcomers from mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan together. This does not include other Chinese heritage immigrants such as immigrants from Singapore because English is one of the official languages in Singapore. Therefore, the Chinese-Singaporean immigrants' experiences of heritage language maintenance and development in Canada would be distinct from those of Chinese heritage groups who are not from English-speaking regions. Unlike Korean and Chinese immigrant groups, Japanese immigrant families that were reported on in the reviewed literature include mixed-heritage of a Japanese mother and a non-Japanese, Canadian father. *Japanese immigrants* refer to families with Japanese heritage where both or either parent is from Japan. *First-generation* immigrants are naturalized citizens of a particular country, for example, after immigration. The term *1.5-generation* indicates the offspring of immigrants who are foreign born and settled in the host country with their immigrant parents. *Second-generation* denotes immigrant descents, who were born in the new country after their parents already migrated.

**Research Path**

To locate literature, I used advanced search on the University of Victoria's library website, ERIC, and ProQuest with search terms, "Asian immigrants", "heritage language education", "the relationship between bilingualism and identity formation", and "ethnic language retention in a multilingual society" in an attempt to navigate five questions on my topic. After the initial search, I dropped the term Asian immigrants and used specific terms such as Korean, Chinese, and Japanese immigrants to better locate the literature. I also used synonyms such as maintenance, preservation, and retention or identity formation, and construction to broaden the searches. I further located three dissertations from the websites of University of Victoria, University of British Columbia, and McGill University.

The literature that was located includes both quantitative and qualitative studies to attain deep intuitive understanding as to HL maintenance and development among Asian immigrants in Canada. Among the quantitative studies, there are large samples of Asian immigrant parents and their children, arranging from 100 to 200, who were administered for surveys. The participants identified demographic details such as birthplace, English and HL proficiency, bilingual development, linguistic resources available at home, attitudes and efforts toward HL education and the like. Qualitative research primarily included case studies or ethnographies; interviews with smaller number of participants, less than 10, in all the reviewed studies. Researchers interviewed immigrant parents and their children, often principals of heritage language schools in the community regarding HL maintenance and promotion, and made observations of immigrant offspring's HL literacy development and cultural practices.

Twenty-two peer reviewed journal articles, three dissertations and several chapters from two books were examined to navigate answers for five guiding questions I formulated to explore

and evaluate the topic: Heritage language maintenance and development among Korean, Chinese, and Japanese immigrants in Canada. Ten Canadian studies of Korean, Chinese, and Japanese immigrants were located. Only recent studies (since 2000) are included since immigration trends have changed over the decades. Emerging literature describes Asian immigrants who settled down in Canada since the late 80's differ from earlier immigrant groups for two main reasons, the comparatively higher socioeconomic status and higher education level of the parents (Duff & Kim, 2012; Yoon 2014). This is partly a result of the Business Immigration Programme enacted in 1986, which gave priority to mid-upper class and educated Asian immigrants. Therefore, the date of literature is limited to the period from 2000 to present, and more than half of the reviewed literature was published after 2010. Almost all the studies were conducted with one particular ethnic group in a few gateway cities, namely Korean immigrants in Montreal, Chinese immigrants in Toronto, and Japanese immigrants in Vancouver. According to the research that was examined, these are the most popular destinations for immigrants to settle down owing to the solid foundation of ethnic communities.

The review of literature is guided by five questions:

- How do Asian immigrant parents support their children in the maintenance of heritage language?
- What are parental rationales toward heritage language maintenance of their children?
- How does HL competence contribute to identity formation among Asian immigrant adolescents?
- What are the experiences of heritage language loss amongst the offspring of Asian immigrants?



- What are the patterns of heritage language learning and using among Asian immigrant descendants?

In the following section, I illustrate similar findings among Asian immigrants in Canada, note differences in particular immigrant population, and then highlight key points, the most surprising data, or research gaps at the end of each question.

## **Factors that Influence Heritage Language Maintenance**

### **Parental Role in Heritage Language Maintenance**

The first question is “How do Asian immigrant parents support their children in the maintenance and development of heritage language?” This question explores parental attitudes and efforts toward HL promotion for the next generation. Immigrant parents are significant linguistic resources for their children; therefore, examining the presence of parental support in the family would contribute to understand how it assists immigrant offspring’s HL development. There are three general patterns of parental support in their children’s maintenance and development of heritage language across Asian immigrants: (a) using the heritage language at home; (b) encouraging their children to attend a heritage school; and (c) travelling to the homeland.

**Heritage language use at home.** Asian immigrant parents actively involved in their children’s HL education by urging constant HL use at home (Li, 2006a; Noro, 2009; Park, 2013). Such parents appeared to be enthusiastic with regard to their children’s oral proficiency in HL; they often adopted a HL only policy for communication with their children on a daily basis and promoted oral proficiency through direct teaching. For example, Park (2013) found that Korean immigrant parents in Montreal exclusively used HL when they communicated with their children with particular emphasis on honorifics. The Korean parents explained that appropriate HL use of honorifics was important for appropriate oral communication with older interlocutors.

Chinese immigrant families in Vancouver are also reported to deliberately pursue HL as a home language; even when their children respond in English. Sometimes, the parents avoid using English at all and continue to speak ethnic language to encourage consistent HL use at home (Li, 2006a). Sakamoto (2006) found that Japanese immigrant parents in Toronto corrected their

children's pronunciation when they mispronounced certain sounds, helped them with verb conjugations, and used synonyms to expand vocabulary use, rather than repeating the same vocabulary when they communicated with their children.

It is evident that Asian immigrant parents actively promote their children's HL use at home and foster oral proficiency by employing explicit teaching. Many support a HL-only policy in the home even though the focal points can be different in each group: Korean parents focus on appropriate honorific use, Chinese parents model consistent HL use, and Japanese parents promote correct HL use and vocabulary expansion. However, it should be noted that Korean immigrant parents' in Park's study of Koreans and Japanese immigrant mothers in Sakamoto's study were asked by researchers whether they employ specific strategies when they communicate with their children to improve oral proficiency and this feature of the research method results in limiting the range of strategies that are reported. For example, Japanese immigrant mothers appeared to be silent on honorific forms in HL education. Both the Korean and Japanese languages contain a lot of honorifics, but only Korean parents mentioned that they promote their correct use. The researcher (Sakamoto, 006) did not specifically ask about whether Japanese immigrant parents pay attention to promote correct use of honorifics during the semi-structured interview in the study. In the case of Korean immigrants, the study (Park, 2011) included questions with regard to parental expectations toward their children's HL proficiency, but not home language-use strategies. On the other hand, Li's study (2006a) focused on Chinese immigrant parents' HL use itself, such as frequency or context of their speech. Since the study explored how frequently parents' use HL and how parents and children relate to each other during the conversation, it did not ask for information on parents' strategic approaches when they promote HL use at home. The methodology of a study may provide an explanation of why

certain strategies are reported only in relation to a particular language. It can be assumed that the strategies that are reported are only a small sample of the full range of family practices.

Along with ongoing oral communications in HL with their children, Asian parents promoted literacy activities in their ethnic language on a regular basis (Kim, 2013; Li, 2006b; Minami, 2013). Korean immigrant families in Kim's study (2013) regularly checked in with their children in an attempt to provide reading materials, such as storybooks, newspapers, magazines, and comic books, that most suit their children's interests. They asked the children what types of reading materials they would be interested in and order them online, or asked their family in Korea to send them to Canada. Li (2006b) found that Chinese immigrant parents read books with their children, reviewed new vocabulary and made sticky notes of new words so their children could better memorize them. Japanese immigrant parents read storybooks to their children at bedtime or after their children have completed schoolwork (Minami, 2013). The parents explained the meaning of the words in the books, asked questions about the content, and encouraged their children to re-tell the story. The results reported from Korean immigrant parents suggest they were less involved in reading practices, such as locating materials that suit their children's interests, and they did not report the extent to which they monitored reading activities. Conversely, Chinese and Japanese immigrant parents were reported to read books with their children and followed up afterwards by making a list of new vocabulary in the book, or asking questions about the story.

The age of participants' children might affect parental involvement in their children's reading activities. Korean immigrant parents in Kim's study (2013) were reported to have older children than the Chinese (2006b) and Japanese (Minami, 2013) parents, who had children in lower grades in primary schools.

Although Asian immigrant parents across the three ethnic groups made an effort to encourage their children's reading activities, it needs to be remarked that most parents only utilized printed materials for their children such as storybooks, magazines, and newspapers. The exception here was the Japanese immigrant parents (Caidi & Nomura, 2013). Japanese immigrants in Toronto were reported to use a variety of representations of literacy for their children including subscribing to monthly Japanese educational reading materials such as *Kodomo Challenge*, playing word games, and singing songs. The study suggests that it is essential to provide such a rich and varied repertoire of home literacy practices for immigrant children's literacy development, as it contributes to HL learners' interests and motivations for enhancing literacy skills. However, it is important to note that the participants in the study are Japanese mothers who have preschoolers, age three to five. Therefore, what is considered a *rich* and *varied repertoire* of literacy activities for those preschoolers may not be applicable for older immigrant children.

As for writing practices, Asian immigrant parents often asked their children to write heritage language letters or emails to their grandparents or relatives in their or their parents' homeland, since it enhances their writing skills, broadens their range of vocabulary and connects them to their family members who are not fluent in Canada's official languages (Kim, 2013; Minami, 2013). For example, Korean parents were reported to proofread their children's writings so they could edit them together, or give feedback for their children to correct any mistakes (Kim, 2013). Compared to Korean immigrant parents, who were not found to raise issues with writing practices in the literature, Chinese and Japanese parents were reported to be particularly thorough and paid attention to details when it comes to writing practices (Li, 2006a; Minami, 2013). The simplicity and accessibility of the Korean alphabet *Hangul* may give a partial

explanation for this contrast. *Hangul* consists of only 14 consonants and 10 vowels, and the spelling of Korean using *Hangul* very closely reflects normal pronunciation. This characteristic of *Hangul* may contribute to the ease with which Korean immigrant parents can promote writing practices. In contrast, both the Chinese and Japanese languages use Chinese characters, which are logograms. This comprises the primary writing system in Chinese or part (*Kanji*) of the writing system in Japanese. Each character carries a meaning, and often has multiple meanings depending on the context or how a particular character is combined with other character(s). Chinese and Japanese immigrant parents acknowledged that one stroke or dot could entirely change the meaning due to the characteristics of Chinese characters.

Li's study (2006a) of Chinese immigrant families in Vancouver revealed that they asked their children to learn a certain number of new Chinese characters every day, and encouraged them to distinguish Chinese characters that look similar to each other. Minami (2013) also reported similar findings in the Japanese immigrant group. Japanese mothers struggled with promoting their children's competence in *Kanji*, as *Kanji* acquisition requires precise denotations to fully convey the intended meaning. Regardless of such significant linguistic characteristics, all but one of the studies (Belanger & Verkuyten, 2010) raised questions whether phonology or orthography of HL affects how parents approach and employ writing practices at home: Chinese immigrant parents might perceive promoting literacy at home as a challenging task owing to the linguistic characteristics of the Chinese language, such as different orthographic systems. As a result, immigrant parents who tried to teach Chinese writing express contentment as long as their children can speak HL, but they did not particularly expect their children to be literate. Those parents may eventually discourage their children's writing practices. It is a clear indication of how some immigrant parents are isolated in the process of fostering their children's writing skills

because they did not seek external support to improve writing from HL educators or experts in education even when they were aware that writing is challenging.

Within the literature that was reviewed, Japanese immigrant parents appeared to be the most supportive of their children's HL education and development by employing constant HL use at home, and promoting literacy practices despite the fact that a majority of them were in mixed-heritage families. One might predict that Korean and Chinese immigrant families would be more supportive of their children's HL education because in the research it is reported that there are generally two parental figures who are both fluent HL speakers in the Korean and Chinese groups.

Japanese immigrant parents that are in mixed-race marriages may initiate stronger desire for their children's HL competence. They employed explicit teaching to nurture oral proficiency, located reading materials, monitored their children's reading activities, and encouraged writing practices. On the contrary, Korean and Chinese immigrant parents were occasionally found to be less supportive, or even unsupportive of HL education for their children: Korean parents only located reading materials without monitoring their children's reading activities, whereas Chinese immigrant parents modeled HL use, rather than employing direct teaching to promote oral proficiency. However the differences in literacy practices between ethnic groups may be due to the sampling of the Korean study and methodology of the Chinese study. In case of the Korean study, the children's age range was higher than that of both the Chinese and Japanese groups. The fact that Korean children in the study were older than their Chinese or Japanese counterparts might have affected Korean parents' strategies to promote reading practices at home: they located reading materials that matched their children's interests and needs, rather than reading

books together. The Chinese study did not examine any parental strategies in particular. Different sampling groups and methodologies in the study might have yielded different results.

**Heritage language use in heritage school.** Asian immigrant parents in the reviewed literature provided heritage-language speaking milieu outside the home to promote their children's HL development. A majority of Asian immigrant parents report that they encourage their children to attend heritage language schools because they consider formal HL education to be beneficial (Chow, 2001, 2004; Kawaguchi, 2014; Park, 2011). There seem to be three main benefits parents report for attending heritage language schools: language learning, culture maintenance, and the establishment of co-ethnic friendship networks. Korean immigrant children that were studied in the semi-structured interviews by Park (2011) reported that they took part in language lessons and participated in HL school activities, namely learning traditional music instruments, performing Korean fan dance, and cooking ethnic food (Park, 2011).

Chinese immigrant families in Calgary and Toronto highlighted establishing co-ethnic friendship networks as a benefit of attending HL school (Chow 2001, 2004). The parents explained that Chinese heritage language schools were at the core of ethnic language and culture maintenance, as their children share ethnic customs and values with co-ethnic peers at HL schools. Japanese immigrant parents reported that HL school not only promoted linguistic competence, but also raised cultural awareness (Kawaguchi, 2014). Children celebrate Japanese holidays, such as *Setsubun* and *Hinamatsuri*, and learn Japanese manners and behavior.

Asian immigrant parents across the three ethnic groups reported the HL schools as valuable HL learning domains for their children. However, Chinese immigrant parents are found to be more prone to establishing co-ethnic networks through HL schools compared to their Korean and Japanese counterparts. It is important to note that Chinese immigrant parents



consider co-ethnic networking as a primary benefit of attending HL schools, even in places where there is a large concentration or growing Chinese immigrant population, such as Calgary (Chow, 2001) and Toronto (Chow, 2004). There are various ethnic organizations within these communities such as Chinatowns, theatres, and dance and martial art schools, as Chinese immigrants have established stable ethnic communities in major cities in Canada. Nonetheless, Chinese immigrant parents specifically state that HL is the main milieu for their children's co-ethnic interaction.

It needs to be noted that Chinese heritage language schools were significantly larger scale, with hundreds of registrations compared to Korean and Japanese heritage language schools. The number of enrolled students at Korean HL school is often less than 100, (Park, 2011) and Japanese HL learners at HL schools are not much greater than 100 (Kawaguchi, 2014). As there is a solid presence of co-ethnic peers at Chinese heritage language schools, the opportunities for and overall quality of communication with peers increase. The larger size of the Chinese heritage language school communities may influence Chinese parents' emphasis on co-ethnic networking as a major benefit of attending an HL school.

Whereas Asian immigrant families acknowledged that attending HL school is beneficial, criticisms have been raised about HL schools, in particular the limited instruction time typical of such schools (Chow, 2001; Kawaguchi, 2014; Park, 2011). All heritage schools across the three ethnic communities were reported to only offer HL classes once on the weekend, with limited instruction time dedicated to these classes. For example, Park (2011) reported in his study of Korean heritage school learners in Montreal that Korean HL schools were operated once per weekend, and only for two hours. This is similar to the schedule for Chinese heritage schools in

Calgary (Chow, 2001) and Japanese heritage schools in Greater Vancouver (Kawaguchi, 2014) that were operated either on Friday after school, or on the weekend.

Although the instruction time varied in the schools from two to three hours per week, the reports in the literature did not explain the reasons for the difference in hours of instruction, or in how many weeks HL programs run during the year. What is clear is that no significant difference was found in regard to the limited instruction time of HL schools across Korean, Chinese, and Japanese immigrants in Canada. On one hand, limited HL instruction time at HL schools could be a concern, as it might not provide enough time for learners to practice and interact in their respective HL. On the other hand, they attended public school full-time during weekdays, then attended another school (HL school) on the weekend. It might prove stressful or burdensome for immigrant children to receive extra formal education on the weekend because their social engagements may conflict with the class hours of HL schools.

It is apparent that HL schools provide valuable HL and culture learning environments, and therefore attract HL learners. However, differences between two hour- and three-hour- class and pedagogical approaches or strategies to make the best use of limited class hours remain unanswered. Although the reviewed studies revealed that Asian immigrant families considered attending heritage language schools as beneficial for linguistic development, cultural solidity, and co-ethnic networking, little research has been done as to the effectiveness of HL schools on those benefits. Investigation of how insufficient instruction time affects learners' linguistic development, how cultural solidity is promoted within the school curriculum, and how HL learners interact with one another would contribute to sustainable provision of learning resources to compensate for limited language instruction time and the understanding of effectiveness of HL schools.

**Visiting the home country.** A third major pattern of parental support in their children's maintenance and development of heritage language is travelling to the parents' homeland to spend time with grandparents and visit other relatives. This is important because it exposes the children to their or their parents' ethnic culture and allows them to practice the language with native speakers (Jeon, 2012; Li, 2006a; Minami, 2013). Korean immigrants in Greater Toronto responded to a survey indicating that they travelled back to Korea during the summer vacations to visit their extended family and to give their children opportunities to practice Korean (Jeon, 2012). The parents and their children travelled together annually as one way of promoting HL.

Chinese immigrant parents flew back to Hong Kong not limited to summer vacations with their children who were in primary school (Li, 2006a). They tried to see their family and relatives as often as possible, and encouraged their children to communicate in HL as well as learn Chinese manners during the visits. In the interviews with those Chinese immigrant parents, neither the researcher nor the parents identified what the term *often* indicated. Whether it meant an annual trip to Hong Kong, or multiple trips a year is not known.

In Minami's study (2013), Japanese immigrant mothers reported that they travelled back to Japan when they could afford the trip in order to immerse their children in their HL speaking-culture, connected them to extended family, and promoted positive attitudes toward their ethnicity. How often they could afford the trip remains unspecified in the study.

Asian immigrant parents advocated the benefits of spending an extend time period in their home countries. No significant difference was found across the three ethnic groups. However, how often Chinese and Japanese immigrant families travelled back to their homeland is unclear in the literature. The frequency of travel could be a significant contributor because the more they travel, the more opportunities their children would have to practice and develop their

HL. Although socioeconomic status might affect immigrant families' decisions regarding when to visit, as Japanese immigrants mentioned affordability of the trip (Minami, 2013), it should be noted that Japanese immigrant families in the reviewed studies are mixed heritage, typically Japanese mother and a non-Japanese father. They might be less motivated to travel as often as Korean and Chinese immigrant families that consist of two parents of the same ethnic background. Having only one Japanese parent could suggest that the immigrant family had fewer members of their extended family living in Japan, whereas Korean and Chinese families are likely to have more family and relatives back in their home countries. This may be a contributing factor for the frequency in which Asian immigrant families visited their homeland.

There is literature that reports of travelling to their or their parents' homeland as active parental support of HL maintenance. However, it may be questioned whether this can be considered active parental involvement because parents seem to believe that simply immersing their children in an environment where they are surrounded by native speakers of their respective ethnic language will enhance linguistic skills. This immersion may come at the expense of employing learning strategies or making an effort to develop HL during the visit. It is also plausible that a trip to their homeland is not desired by the immigrant children. In that case, spending an extended period of time in their country of origin might not be as beneficial as the parents expect it to be. For this reason, it is necessary to further explore how parents promote HL use, encourage interactions with other HL speakers, and navigate linguistic development of their children during these trips.

**Discussion of factors that influence heritage language maintenance.** To sum up, the research with regard to support for HL shows that Asian immigrant parents are found to enthusiastically support HL in three main ways: constant use of heritage language at home,

encouraging their children to attend a heritage school, and travelling with their children to the homeland. The degree of *active parental involvement* varies depends on the type of support employed. That is, parents are most involved in communicating in HL on a daily basis and promoting HL literacy at home which often includes direct teaching, whereas they appear to be less involved with their children's language learning at HL schools and with visits to the homeland. Even though these parents sent their children to HL schools every weekend and make regular trips to their home countries, the reviewed studies did not report any parental strategies for linguistic development in relation to what their children learn at HL school or how to better promote HL use when they visit their homeland. Therefore, while it seems that Asian immigrant parents actively support their children's HL development by providing resources and HL milieux, the degree of parental involvement differs greatly. How the varied degrees of parental support affect immigrant children's HL competence differently would better contribute to the understanding of parental roles in HL maintenance.

### **Parental Rationales for Teaching HL**

The second review question is, "What are parental rationales toward heritage language maintenance of their children?" This question is leading to the examination of factors that shape parental reasoning in HL retention. Among the reasons that Asian immigrant parents display a strong desire for their children to maintain HL, there are three of particular significant: (a) effective family communication, (b) physical appearance and ethnic background, and (c) economic prospects.

**Effective family communication.** Asian immigrant parents reported that they encouraged their children to learn HL because it contributes to effective family communication

(Li, 2006a; Minami, 2013; Park, 2009). For example, Korean immigrant families in Montreal report that they promote HL use, as their extended family in Korea often exhibits no competence in English. Therefore, HL is the only available communicative tool to connect immediate and extended family to ensure strong and healthy intergenerational relationships (Park, 2009). This finding suggests that those Korean immigrant families have solid family ties and it is reflected in their encouragement of their children's HL maintenance. Given that their extended family resides in Korea, such strong family ties may also have an impact on connection to their home country, such as retention of ethnic nationality after migration. However, the surveyed research only reveals that some Korean parents are permanent residents in Canada while maintaining their ethnic nationality, whereas the nationalities of Chinese or Japanese parents are unknown. It remains uncertain whether parents' retention of ethnic nationality after migration is closely related to their sense of belonging to their homeland and further mediates their attitudes toward HL maintenance and development.

Chinese immigrant parents also reported the role of HL in their family communication (Li, 2006a). Chinese parents' in Li's study speak different HL, as they are from different regions of China and their dialects are considerably distinct. Owing to China's linguistic diversity, some Chinese immigrant parents do not comprehend each other's HL, but they understand Mandarin Chinese, which is the official language and the language of instruction in public schools of Mainland China. Consequently, they decided to teach Mandarin Chinese to their children, as it is the most effective communicative language for the family. This linguistic diversity in Chinese families may be the reason for them to be more tied to co-ethnic networking than Japanese or Koreans, as reported in the previous section with regard to benefits of attending HL schools. The language of instruction at Chinese HL schools is likely to be Mandarin Chinese except for the

regions where large Cantonese-speaking immigrant groups reside. Therefore an HL school is a significant Mandarin Chinese-speaking milieu for immigrant children because it facilitates the use of the HL, which fosters effective communication within the family.

Japanese immigrant families expressed that they wanted their children to learn the ethnic language so they could converse in Japanese and further contribute to meaningful parent-child communication (Minami, 2013). In the case of intermarried families consisting of a Japanese mother and a father with other ethnic backgrounds, the mother worried whether their children feel a linguistic gap between them. Therefore, those parents had a tendency to urge their children's HL education for effective parent-child communication at home. In interviews with mixed race families (Minami, 2013), parents reported that by learning the Japanese language, the children would better understand their Japanese parent and possibly develop more interests about their parents' background.

Overall, Asian immigrant parents report that they promote HL use for effective family communication even though their centre of interests do not necessarily coincide: Korean parents emphasize intergenerational harmony, Chinese parents highlight their dissimilar linguistic backgrounds, and Japanese immigrant mothers are concerned with the possibility of a communication barrier between parent-child. These differences indicate how different family environments and relations shape parental rationales toward HL maintenance. It may be that some of these differences are the result of research design. Minami only interviewed mothers and neglected their non-Japanese spouses. Unless their non-Japanese spouses exhibit high competence in Japanese, communication in Japanese at home may not be conducive to effective family communication, but only facilitates the Japanese mother-child relationship.

Interestingly, none of the studies draw attention to Asian immigrant parents' English or French proficiency as a means for effective family communication. Since Asian immigrant parents' are also likely to develop competence in English or French over time, there might be another way to reduce linguistic barrier between parents and children. There is therefore a contradiction: if "effective family communication" were to be the real goal, parents could contribute to reaching it by increasing their competence in the language of the child, which may be not HL. So the decision to maintain the HL in the home is only partially motivated by the need for inter-generational communication.

**Physical appearance and ethnic background.** Asian immigrant parents reported that they encouraged their children to acquire HL owing to their physical characteristics such as figure, color of hair, facial features and ethnic backgrounds (Caidi & Nomura, 2013; Kim 2013). For example, Korean immigrant parents are found to foster HL identity because of their concern that their children's different physical appearance might impede social integration into the larger society. The parents stated that their children would always be considered Asian rather than Canadian regardless of their high competence in English (Kim, 2013). Therefore, Korean immigrant parents claim that it is crucial for their children to establish and preserve their ethnic identities as Koreans through learning Korean language. Likewise, Japanese immigrant mothers who are married to non-Japanese heritage partners emphasize HL learning because of their children's appearance and ethnic background. Even though they are half-Japanese, they exhibit features of Japanese, such as dark hair (Caidi & Nomura, 2013). There are two reasons that Japanese immigrant mothers foster their children's HL education: (a) the children have a Japanese parent living at home, and (b) the children are Asian in appearance. Although some mixed-race children might exhibit more Asian physical characteristics than other mixed-race



children, the possibility of having an identity concern about not looking ethnic enough and its impact on HL maintenance is not mentioned in the literature.

Both Korean and Japanese immigrant parents reported that their children's appearance was a force in promoting HL education. An association is made between biological aspects and a cultural feature, language. However, there is inconsistency in the study of Chinese immigrant parents; they seem to be less concerned with physical attributes as a rationale for teaching HL than Korean or Japanese parents. Literature on Chinese immigrants suggests that Chinese immigrant parents encourage their children's HL development because of the ethnicity, which justifies parent expectations toward HL competence, rather than how their children look different from Euro-Western Canadians, who are often described as simply as *Canadians* (Costigan, Hua & Su, 2009). It is important to consider that Chinese immigrants are large in number and have established stable ethnic communities in Canada compared to their Korean and Japanese counterparts; Chinese is the largest minority group and their language is the third most spoken language in Canada (Man, 2006). The presence of strong ethnolinguistic vitality in Chinese groups may affect Chinese parents' reasoning for ethnic language education.

It should be noted that the research merely explored what it means for Asian immigrants to be considered Canadian. As Canada is a multilingual and multicultural country consisting of diverse ethnic groups, being Canadian does not signify the exhibition of particular facial features, color, shape, or ethnicity. Therefore those Korean and Japanese parents' remarks in relation to their children's physical characteristics need further examination to clarify why non Euro-Western appearance is considered as an exertion in HL promotion: (a) what does it mean to be Canadian? (b) To what extent do those Korean immigrant parents consider their children's

physical characteristics as a hindrance in social integration or how do Japanese immigrants justify their children's appearance as a rationale for HL development?

**Economic prospects.** Asian immigrant parents promote their children's HL development as they project that being able to speak both HL and English will ensure better future economic opportunities for their children (Kawaguchi, 2014; Man, 2006; Shin, 2015). That is, they predict bilingual immigrant offspring would be in advantageous position whether they look for career in their country of origin, or in Canada. For example, Shin's study (2015) of Korean immigrants in Toronto reported that Korean parents assumed their children's competence in both heritage and dominant language would guarantee more job opportunities in a global market when they grew up. Chinese immigrant families are found to exhibit their desires for their children to achieve high competence in HL to enhance career opportunities (Man, 2006). The parents stated that they emphasized the need to study and speak HL every day because they foresaw the benefits of their children's HL proficiency in their future careers. They were optimistic about China's political and economic influence in Canada as they considered competence in Chinese to be valuable in the job market. However, uncertainty remains in the literature about which dialects of HL Chinese immigrant parents encouraged their children to acquire for future economic security. As previously reported, some Chinese immigrant parents are found to speak distinctive dialects of China depending on where they resided before migration. Therefore they agreed to teach Mandarin Chinese for effective family communication. With regard to economic prospects, it is unclear whether they also promoted acquisition of Mandarin Chinese or other regional dialects.

Japanese immigrants in Greater Vancouver reported that they encouraged their children's HL retention and development so they could have the option of making use of Japanese for their future jobs (Kawaguchi, 2014).

It is evident that Asian immigrant parents across the three ethnic groups value HL competence in their children's future career path: Korean and Japanese immigrant parents consider HL competence as an additional asset, whereas Chinese immigrant parents appear to be positive about economic growth of China and its influence in the job market in Canada. A feature of this literature about economic prospects is that the participants of the reviewed studies are reported to have children who were primarily in elementary or middle schools. Whether there were aimed age groups of immigrant children in regard to economic prospects is unexplored. In addition, parental anecdotes about the possibility of their offspring's future career success in career as a merit of bilingualism only expressed parental expectations without any verification. It is possible that immigrant children might not agree with their parents' beliefs about the value of high HL competence for their future careers. Although bilingualism would possibly be an asset, linguistic competence is not the only significant factor in employment. Depending on the career, prominence of linguistic proficiency could vary as well. Investigation on the actualities of how bilingualism affects economic advantages for Asian immigrant adolescents who are at the stage of career search would better support parental beliefs on the relationship between linguistic competence and career path.

**Discussion of rationales for teaching HL.** In general, there are three parent rationales for their children's HL maintenance and development: effective family communication, physical appearance and ethnic background, and economic prospects. Korean immigrant parents promote HL learning for intergenerational harmony, managing the different physical attributes which might hinder social integration, and better career opportunities. Chinese parents are found to teach HL that both parents are competent in. They expected their children to be competent in their HL because of their ethnic background, and predict HL competence to be a benefit in their

children's career path, due to an optimistic view of the future economic growth of China. Japanese parents are reported to emphasize HL education for meaningful parent-child communication, to account for their children's ethnicity and appearance, and future economic security.

There is an inconsistency in the literature with regard to parental reasoning toward HL education. Some parents asserted that they want to focus on English education, as learning multiple languages might be confusing for their children (Li, 2006a; Park & Sarkar, 2007). For example, Korean immigrant parents who resided in Montreal where French and English are the official and actively spoken languages reported that they were reluctant to encourage their children to learn HL if their children did not want to (Park & Sarkar, 2007); learning three languages could be stressful for their children and the increased workloads might burn them out. Some parents sent their children to schools where the language of instruction is English; however, it is inevitable for them to learn three languages given the linguistic circumstances of the region. Therefore, they let their children decide whether they wanted to learn HL and practice daily. However, based on the data available, whether HL maintenance and development is more challenging in Montreal than Toronto or Vancouver, where French is not widely spoken may not be inferred due to the relatively small sample group in Park and Sarkar's study (9 Korean immigrant parents). Chinese parents worried that if their children struggle with learning multiple languages and did not allocate enough time to study English, they might fall behind at school. Those parents supposed HL retention could lead to their children's underperformance in academic accomplishment at school (Li, 2006a).

The most surprising finding in regard to research about parental rationales toward heritage language maintenance and promotion for their children is lack of information on single

parent households and presence of grandparents' support. All the Asian immigrant children had both parental figures in the study. It would be worthwhile to examine heritage language maintenance and development in a single household, as there is only one parent who locates learning resources and monitors their children's HL education at home. Promotion of HL in a single parent house-hold may be more challenging compared to household where two parents cooperate for their children's HL development, which could further affect parent's outlook and reasoning of HL education.

None of the studies include the presence of grandparents' support in HL development of Asian immigrant children in the Canadian context. Research could explore how grandparents' assistance influences parental perspectives toward promotion of HL education for Asian immigrant offspring whose grandparents also reside in Canada, because the presence of their support increases HL input and output, and further affects HL facilitation.

### **HL Competence and Identity Formation**

The third review question is "How does HL competence contribute to identity formation among Asian immigrant youths?" The purpose of the answer to this question is to examine the role of HL proficiency in the identity construction of Asian immigrants in Canada. It focuses on adolescents as identity formation of younger immigrant children is hardly mentioned in the literature. The major finding is that Asian immigrant youths across the three ethnic groups found HL competence as a crucial component in their identity for two main reasons: (a) an indicator of ethnic identity and (b) promotion of positive sense of ethnic identity.

**HL as an indicator of ethnic identity.** Asian immigrant adolescents pointed out that HL competence was essential part of their identity (Belanger & Verkuyten, 2010; Duff & Kim, 2012;

Noro, 2009). That is, Asian immigrant youths considered competence in their HL to be a significant indicator of how ethnic they were. For example, Korean adolescents in Duff and Kim's study reported that HL competence justifies *Koreanness* (Duff & Kim, 2012). They often distinguished co-ethnic peers with high HL proficiency from those who had low HL proficiency. Korean immigrant adolescents considered those who were less proficient in Korean as not ethnic enough. Chinese youths also mentioned *real Chinese*, which indicates Chinese adolescents who are fluent enough in Chinese so that they could carry on a conversation and understand media such as watching news or reading newspapers (Belanger & Verkuyten, 2010). In Noro's study (2009) of Japanese youths in Vancouver and Victoria reported that their ability to express themselves and communicate in HL cultivated their ethnic identity.

Korean and Chinese immigrant adolescents in the reviewed studies reported that they experienced varying degrees of racism or discrimination in regard to their ethnic identity at school (Belanger & Verkuyten, 2010; Shin, 2015). Descendants of Korean and Chinese parents are reported that they were often asked about their country of origin regardless of their high competence in English. Korean immigrant adolescents stated that they felt marginalized by questions about their ethnic heritage: "Do you have Asian parents?" (Belanger & Verkuyten, 2010), or "What is Korea?" (Shin, 2015) and it leads them to cluster around and socialize with their co-ethnic peers (Shin, 2015). Chinese immigrant youths mentioned that they also felt sense of belonging and comfort by speaking their ethnic language with peers (Belanger & Verkuyten, 2010). Those immigrant adolescents' unpleasant experiences of marginalization and exclusion in a larger society, which corroborate what is previously reported on the parent rationale for HL education: physical appearance and ethnic backgrounds, may be serving to reinforce the use of HL rather than abandoning HL. It seems that there are convergent internal and external forces

that promote HL education. Internal forces such as family ties and connection to their homeland may pull families toward HL maintenance, whereas the experience of racial prejudice based on physical appearance that is from the outside of the ethnic group push families toward HL maintenance.

In Shin's study (2015), the researcher also introduces the term *banana*, which denotes the offspring of Asian immigrants, not limited to particular ethnic group, who speaks HL with English accent or uses a mixed language of HL and English due to their low competence in the ethnic language. As a banana is yellow outside but white inside, yellow represents facial colour of Asian adolescents and white indicates *Canadianness* inside, which refers to the lack of linguistic knowledge in HL. Shin's research reveals that this term is generally used to express unfavourable feelings toward those Asian immigrant adolescents who do not exhibit high HL competence. *Banana* as a negative attribute is a clear indication of Asian immigrant population's high expectation toward HL proficiency: speaking HL without English accent, and achieving competence in HL literacy.

It needs to be noted that Korean and Chinese immigrant adolescents reported using HL as a demarcation marker between co-ethnic peers with high HL competence and low HL competence (Belanger & Verkuyten, 2010; Duff & Kim, 2012), whereas Japanese immigrant youths plainly explained that linguistic capacity in their HL fostered their ethnic identity (Noro, 2009). Japanese immigrant youths in the studies are half-Japanese, therefore dividing how Japanese they are may not seem to be salient for them. The participants in Duff and Kim's study were exclusively 1.5-generation Korean immigrants, the Chinese adolescents were second-generation immigrants without exception, and the Japanese youths were either 1.5 or second-generation immigrants. It is particularly important to note that not only 1.5-generation, but also

second-generation immigrant adolescents who were born and have been exclusively raised in Canada identified a high proficiency in HL as an indicator of ethnic identity. It may indicate that place of birth is not a significant factor in Asian immigrant adolescents' sense of connection to their ethnic language.

**Promotion of ethnic identity.** Asian immigrant youths reported that HL competence promoted a positive sense of ethnic identity (Kawaguchi, 2014; Man, 2006; Park, 2011). That is, HL proficiency helped them to better understand the culture of their or their parents' homeland and further promoted a positive sense toward it. For example, Korean immigrant youths in Park's study (2011) explained that learning HL enabled them to experience cultural traditions and practices. By celebrating Korean traditional holidays, and sharing Korean traditional values, they learned how to show respect to older people; when there was an ethnic group gathering for such occasions, younger members of the Korean ethnic group set up and took down the tables, made sure adults sat on chairs, and waited until adults served them first if snacks or meals were involved. Chinese immigrant youths reported (Man, 2006) that they enjoyed celebrating ethnic holidays, learning Chinese dances or art and history and participating in such activities provided opportunities to utilize their HL and boosted their pride in Chinese culture. Kawaguchi (2014) reported that Japanese immigrant adolescents who were learning Japanese language seem to be more interested in learning Japanese cultural elements, such as Japanese traditional games, folk tales, *Kabuki* and the like, compared to their counterparts who have no competence in their HL.

Asian immigrant adolescents expressed that learning HL promotes learners' positive sense of ethnic identity: Korean immigrant adolescents learned Korean manners and behaviours while they utilized HL in various cultural occasions, Chinese immigrant youths felt proud of their culture, and Japanese immigrants who were competent in HL enjoy cultural activities. It is



important to note that only Kawaguchi's study made a comparison of adolescents who had competence in HL and adolescents with no HL competence. Then the researcher concluded that Japanese HL learners' participations in Japanese culture were found to be more enjoyable than those of non-HL learners. Contrarily, Park (2011) and Man (2006) reported exclusively on HL learners' experiences in celebrating ethnic holidays, and taking part in cultural activities. It is possible that such occasions are still engaging and amusing regardless of one's HL proficiency. Therefore, how linguistic competence in HL affects positive sense toward ethnic identity needs to be examined beyond the illustration of *enjoyable* or *proud*.

**Discussion of identity formation.** Asian immigrant youths across three ethnic groups reported that HL competence to be a crucial component in their identity construction as it indicated their ethnic identity and promoted positive sense of ethnic identity. Korean and Chinese immigrant adolescents used HL proficiency as a marker with regard to how ethnic they were and exhibited high expectation toward linguistic knowledge in their HL, whereas their Japanese counterparts expressed somewhat impassively that competence in HL contributed to development of ethnic identity. As to promotion of a positive sense of ethnic identity, Korean immigrant youths reported that HL proficiency enabled them to better understand the culture of their or their parents' homeland, Chinese expressed proud feelings toward their culture, and Japanese youths found participation in cultural activities entertaining. It should be noted that the literature exclusively examined Asian immigrant adolescents' ethnic identity formation and neglected to explore their Canadian identity. However, identity development is such a complex process and HL learners do not only develop their ethnic identity when they constantly and predominantly interact with dominant languages in Canada. Exploration of both ethnic and

Canadian identity construction would provide better insights into immigrant adolescents' negotiation in their process of identity development.

### **Experiences of Heritage Language Loss**

The fourth question is “What are the experiences of heritage language loss amongst Asian immigrant children?” Heritage language loss, which is interchangeably used with first language loss, indicates gradual loss of HL competence as the offspring of immigrants become more dominant language-oriented in a larger society (Cho, 2000). The answer to this question helps to understand the process of how the offspring of Asian immigrants in Canada struggle with HL development and gives profound insight into promoting a plausible countermeasure. There are two dominant factors in Asian immigrants' heritage language loss: (a) age and (b) lack of institutional support.

**Age.** The literature that was examined reported that age is one of the most significant elements in heritage language loss of Asian immigrants (Kawaguchi, 2014; Kim, 2012; Li, 2006 a). Parents remain a dominant linguistic influence for the first few years of their children's life, then children's linguistic environment changes as they grow up. For instance, in Kim's study (2013) of Korean immigrants in Greater Toronto reported that immigrant children in primary school had lower HL proficiency compared to their HL competence before schooling, owing to predominant interaction in English-speaking environment. Chinese immigrant parents who migrated from Hong Kong described how their son was becoming less fluent in Cantonese after he began attending public school (Li, 2006a). He used to be able to communicate in Cantonese with his parents and often asked for help with how to express himself in his HL. However, after he started schooling, he tended to speak more English and refused to communicate in HL at

home because everyone else was speaking English at his school. Gradually, the child forgot Cantonese and English became the home language in the family in order to communicate with the child. This is contradictory to what was reported earlier about Asian immigrants' adoption of an HL only policy at home. It may seem that the parents were left with no choice but to speak English at home, however, it is also an indication of parental commitment concerning the fact that all immigrant children go to school in English, but not all of them lose their HL. When immigrant parents are unsupportive of HL education at home, their children are likely to be deprived of the most significant HL resources and milieu.

Furthermore, while the parents perceive their children's linguistic transition to English as HL loss, the children's point of view might differ. Those who migrated at an early age or were born and raised in Canada may find utilizing two languages to be a burden. Immigrant children could view the transition to linguistic dominance of English or French as successful integration into a larger society. Therefore, immigrant children's perspectives with regard to HL loss should be taken into consideration in the research. Japanese immigrant families also indicated the fact that HL preservation and acquisition became more challenging as their children grew up (Kawaguchi, 2014). Whereas younger immigrant children had more time to focus on learning HL and their linguistic contacts were often limited, older children had more opportunities to experience English-speaking milieu by joining club activities, playing sports and taking music lessons. Consequently, English became the dominant language outside the home in their daily lives and it led Japanese immigrant children to be less fluent in their HL. There might be another factor in Japanese immigrant children's language shift. Not only were they more exposed to English-speaking environments as they grew up, they were also mixed race families with non-

Japanese fathers, and in that respect there was an even stronger force for Japanese language loss among Japanese immigrant children compared to their Korean and Chinese counter parts.

Overall, HL tends to be the primary language for the offspring of Asian immigrants' at the early stage of lives as their linguistic influence is limited to their parents' predominant HL use at home. However, once the children start formal schooling, their exposure to English increases sharply, as do opportunities to make practical use of English. As there is increased exposure to English as children grow, they lose competencies related to the heritage language to the point of losing HL altogether. Although age appears to play a role in HL loss, the literature merely differentiated the age groups. The age of the participants was mixed from primary school-aged children to secondary school-aged students in all studies but two. A thorough re-examination as to how young HL learners gradually lose their ethnic language as they grow up is needed along three dimensions: (a) expectation toward high proficiency in HL; (b) lack of age-appropriate learning materials; (c) desire to fully integrate into mainstream society.

**Lack of institutional support.** Asian immigrant families in the reviewed literature decried that lack of institutional support led to HL loss among their children and youths (Duff & Kim, 2012; Li, 2006a; Noro, 2009). That is, their ethnic languages were not valued or recognized in the Canadian public school systems. For example, Korean immigrant adolescents singled out social exclusion due to the fact that their ethnic and linguistic backgrounds were underappreciated at school (Duff & Kim, 2012). In spite of the multiethnic composition of their schools, Korean immigrant youths reported that they felt that they were being discouraged to speak HL and left out because of their school did not organize any activities that might help HL preservation and acquisition. Chinese immigrant families in Greater Vancouver reported that their children's schools employed English-only policies and did not encourage immigrant

children to retain the ethnic language despite having a large Chinese population at school (Li, 2006a). According to the parents of Chinese immigrant children, school did not offer any support such as heritage language classes for HL development, or occasions for cultural maintenance. As a result, Chinese immigrants children predominantly spoke English at school and perceived their HL as a marginalized language. In Noro's study (2009), Japanese immigrant children and youths reported that they exclusively spoke English at school, as their teachers and peers did not understand Japanese at all. The offspring of Japanese immigrants did not report feelings of exclusion or marginalization at school, which is different from the reports of their Korean or Chinese counterparts.

Despite the fact that Canada is well known for multiethnic foundation of its population, as well as for its proactive policies and initiatives to deliver heritage language instruction and promote cultural diversity (Kondo-Brown, 2006), Asian immigrant parents and their offspring are found to experience a lack of institutional support in their HL maintenance and promotion of cultural awareness: Korean immigrant adolescents felt discouraged to use their HL at school, Chinese immigrant children are reported to perceive their HL as a marginalized language because schools have adopted English-only policies, and Japanese immigrant children and youths mentioned that they exclusively spoke English to communicate with their teachers and classmates who had no competence in Japanese.

Whereas only Li's study (2006a) of Chinese immigrant group highlighted the school's English only policy, it is plausible to infer that the linguistic environment at school is English-dominant in both Korean and Japanese immigrants' cases based on their reports. Both Korean adolescents (Duff & Kim, 2012) and Chinese immigrant children (Li, 2006a) were reported to be reinforced to use English at schools. It is important to note that only Japanese immigrant children

and youths reported their voluntary language choice (e.g. English) to better communicate with their teachers and peers at school (Noro, 2009). Their family environment may provide an explanation of their language choice: they have a Japanese mother who is a fluent Japanese speaker and a non-Japanese father whose mother tongue is not Japanese. This linguistic variation at home may ease Japanese immigrant children and youths' choice to speak English at school.

A major finding in regard to Asian immigrant offspring's experience of HL loss is that there is a difference in predominant language depending on the context. Heritage language was being predominantly used at home and in the ethnic community as previously reported, whereas English was the main language in the school domain. As Sakamoto (2006) pointed out, such separation of HL and English learning contexts is likely to result in unbalanced language development. In other words, immigrant children and youths' linguistic skills in HL may remain mediocre as their HL is nurtured in non-academic and informal domains. Although literature did not disclose the amount of time spent in each context, it could be inferred that immigrant children spent extensive time period in English-speaking domains once formal schooling started whereas they spent less time in HL domains such as home and HL school. The predominant language associated with peer communication may also be a leading factor in the child's choice of primary language depending on the context. HL is primarily used within the co-ethnic group; however, English was predominantly used with the majority number of peers who do not belong to their ethnic circle. Therefore, there should be further attention as to adequate HL development across various domains.

**Discussion of heritage language loss.** The feature of HL loss among Asian immigrant children and youth is that they indicated both age and lack of institutional support as significant factors, without exception. That is, immigrant children exhibited lower HL proficiency once

formal schooling started. They were primarily exposed to English-speaking milieus and it further increased the opportunities of utilizing English more than HL. The absence of institutional support was reported across three ethnic groups. Schools were found to neglect to support HL retention and promote cultural diversity. However, most research in the reviewed literature relied on immigrants' narratives on those factors. Their anecdotes may not be verified by other data sources. For example, maybe the teachers could give anecdotes about how they support HL at school. Only one study included observations of public school as to its linguistic environment and teacher-immigrant student interactions (Li, 2006a). The research revealed that Chinese immigrant children interact with teachers who were primarily Caucasians with no competence in ethnic languages other than English or French even though 80% of enrolled students at school were Chinese. Research could investigate whether there is a political controversy over teaching HL in Canadian public schools by examining provincial curriculum and making suggestions on how to promote multiculturalism in the school domain.

### **Patterns of HL Learning and Use**

As previously reported, parent narratives give insights into how they support their children's HL maintenance and development in the home and ethnic community domains. This section explores how Asian immigrant children and adolescents utilize HL by examining their language socialization. Language socialization refers to how learners are socialized both into and through language by means of interactions with others (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2008). The last question is "What are the patterns of heritage language learning and using among Asian immigrant descents?" I gathered information on HL learning and using with regard to (a) code-switching and (b) media exposure.

**Code-switching.** The offspring of Asian immigrants stated that they code-switched depending on interlocutors (Jeon, 2012; Man, 2006; Minami, 2013). That is, a majority of them spoke HL with their parents because of home language policy, and then they switched the language to English when they interacted with their siblings. For example, Jeon's study (2012) revealed that Korean immigrant youths who spoke HL with their parents but preferred English to HL with their siblings in the absence of their parents. Man (2006) found that 80% of 115 Chinese immigrant adolescents' spoke HL with their parents who had high competence in HL. On the contrary, they reported that they primarily spoke English with their siblings. Minami (2013) also pointed out that Japanese immigrant children and youths seemed to be more consistent with HL use when they communicated with the parents who had high proficiency in HL. According to the parents, their children spoke English to each other when siblings are alone, and then switched to HL in the presence of their parents.

It may indicate that those children and youths code-switch back and forth to the stronger language for flow of communication because parents' HL is stronger, and for siblings they have higher proficiency in English. It is important to note that Japanese immigrant children and youths not only switched to English with siblings but also with their father, who is non-Japanese, whereas Korean and Chinese immigrant youths spoke HL with both parents, then shifted to English when communicating with siblings. Having a non-Japanese heritage father may contribute to more frequent code-switching among Japanese immigrant descendants.

Research did not provide details on the rest of the immigrant children and adolescents who might not code-switch depending on interlocutors: they may have higher proficiency in HL than English because of short residency in Canada, or they might not have siblings to speak HL with. None of the studies differentiated between the offspring of immigrants with siblings and



without. The presence and the number of siblings may be a factor in code-switching, as siblings might discourage or foster each other's HL use. The participants in Man's study were 1.5-generation-immigrants without exception, with a wide distribution of participants' age at arrival in Canada from one to fourteen years old. The relationship between HL proficiency and age at the arrival, and the length of residency in Canada needs to be examined. The earlier they arrive and the longer they stay in Canada, the higher English proficiency they will have, which may further lead to code-switching in daily communication.

**Media exposure.** Asian immigrant children and adolescents were reported to stay connected to their HL through non-academic and pleasure-based media content (Duff & Kim, 2012; Li, 2006a; Sakamoto, 2006). They enjoyed contemporary culture of their or their parents' homeland. For example, Korean adolescents in Duff and Kim's study reported that they had opportunities to learn modern and contemporary Korean language, which is spoken by their counterparts in Korea, while they watched Korean TV shows, listened to Korean music and followed Korean fashion trends. Li (2006a) found that Chinese immigrant children also watched Chinese TV, sang Chinese songs, or listened to Chinese radio. The children reported that such activities were enjoyable and pleasant. Japanese immigrant children and youths were reported to download Japanese music, and enjoyed online surfing on Japanese websites (Sakamoto, 2006). Their parents stated that their children maintained basic language skills in HL by engaging in such activities.

Asian immigrant children and adolescents were frequently in contact with media content related to receptive language skills, such as watching TV, listening to the radio or music, and web surfing. Korean (Duff & Kim, 2012) and Chinese immigrants (Li, 2006a) in the study were reported to learn their ethnic language while they enjoyed HL media content. Although they

went to HL school for formal HL education, their ethnic language (Korean or Chinese) was still not the language of instruction at public school, where they learned academic subjects. Therefore, it is possible that Korean and Chinese immigrants struggled to develop a wide range of vocabulary in their HL and it reflected on the types of media content they enjoy. Conversely, those Japanese immigrant children and adolescents in Sakamoto's study who were found to discontinue learning Japanese in HL schools cited that it was challenging for them to juggle two languages. Discontinuity of HL education may indicate that those immigrant children's HL proficiency is limited to basic vocabulary and grammar, thus they enjoy non-academic and pleasure-based media content, which does not require cognitively demanding skills.

**Discussion of HL use.** There are two general patterns of Asian immigrant children and adolescents' HL learning and use: (a) code-switching; (b) media exposure. They were found to primarily speak HL with their family and relatives, and then switched to English when communicating with their siblings. However, research did not provide whether (a) immigrant children's age of arrival and length of residency in Canada; (b) presence and the number of siblings are contributing factors for code-switching. To fully examine immigrant descendants' language switching depending on interlocutors, such factors need to be investigated. Meanwhile, the offspring of Asian immigrants have reported that they enjoyed certain types of media content in their HL, such as TV shows, radio, web surfing and singing. Whether they continued to learn HL or not, their media contact was limited to which only requires receptive language skills.

### **Implications for Parents and HL Schools**

The review of heritage language maintenance and development among Korean, Chinese, and Japanese immigrants in Canada was organized in relation to five guiding questions: parental roles in HL maintenance, parental rationales for teaching HL, HL competence and identity formation, experience of HL loss, and patterns of HL learning and use. The findings of the current study reveal that (a) immigrant parents are at the core of their children's HL education; (b) heritage language schools take a role in shaping linguistic knowledge, and promoting cultural awareness and co-ethnic network; (c) there is lack of support with regard to HL retention and cultural diversity in the Canadian public schools across the three ethnic groups. However, differences in HL maintenance and development are also found between and within each group owing to their family environment, characteristics of the ethnic languages, and presence or absence of a stable ethnic community within larger society. For example, Korean immigrant families were distinctive from their Chinese or Japanese counterparts for the greater homogeneity in their family environments (Jeon, 2012). Both parents were reported to have same ethnic backgrounds, and no cultural or linguistic variation was reported in the research about Korean immigrant families. Chinese immigrant families were distinctive because they were reported to have the longest history of immigration and large, stable ethnic communities in Canada. Japanese immigrant families that were examined in eight of ten studies included in this review consisted of a Japanese mother and a non-Japanese father. These families were distinct because their children were growing up in a bilingual and bicultural family environment. In addition to these differences between the ethnic groups, there were also many differences between families within each group. Nonetheless, the common feature is the fundamental role of the family for maintaining the heritage language.

Meanwhile, heritage language schools, which provide formal HL education to immigrant children, were reported to be the significant HL milieu outside the home (Chow, 2001, 2004; Kawaguchi, 2014; Park, 2011). Whereas HL schools shared similar features across the three ethnic groups, such as being operated within ethnic community and providing limited instruction time, the scale of HL schools and the number of students varied between ethnic groups. Chinese HL schools were larger in scale and enrolment compared to Korean or Japanese HL schools (Chow, 2004). How HL schools were operated based on such factors, or how they reflected linguistic and cultural features of each group remained unknown in the reviewed studies. However, distinctive family environments and linguistic and cultural features of Korean, Chinese, and Japanese are likely to affect how HL school promote HL development and organize cultural activities.

In the following sections, I organize issues with regard to HL education that arise from the integration of evidence derived from the three ethnic groups. Then I make general suggestions based on their corresponding issues with regard to HL preservation and minority cultures. I also suggest specific implications for a particular group reflecting upon their apparent different needs in HL retention and development in Canada. Implications are presented under three main issues (a) language maintenance and cultural awareness; (b) literacy development; (c) code-switching and bilingualism. In each of these three subsections, both home domain and HL school domain are differentiated, each of which has further subsections.

### **Language Maintenance and Cultural Awareness**

There is ample evidence in the review of literature that Asian immigrant families were supportive of their children's HL maintenance for effective family communication within the

family (Park, 2011), fostering ethnic identity through HL learning (Li, 2006a) and economic prospects (Minami, 2013). Regardless of their thorough efforts in promoting HL retention for their children, the situation facing families for HL maintenance within their homes is not all positive, and could also pose complex challenges.

Effective family communication, for example, is not limited to parent-child discourse, but expands into intergenerational harmony, cultural awareness, and connection to the homeland. A number of issues arise with regard to Asian immigrant families' effort to promote effective family communication. First, family members represent only a small number of persons to interact with. Unless they stay connected with larger extended family, the number of extended family and relatives would be limited to their grandparents, siblings of mother and father, and possibly their children. Second, exchanging emails or letters helps to maintain family connections (Park, 2011), but it is also time consuming, as both sender and receiver would need to write back and forth to communicate. Moreover, it could prove a routine and boring activity as children might repeat habitual writing: saying hi, giving regards, and expressing their wish to see one another in the near future. Third, whether they travel to their homeland annually or regularly as a whole family, flying to Asia is costly. To better assist immigrant families in dealing with such challenges, other opportunities to interact with their family and to develop greater fluency using HL must be found.

**Home domain.** In this subsection, two forms of tools that can be used in HL preservation are presented: the utilization of (a) mobile applications and (b) online learning resources.

***Utilizing mobile applications.*** In the reviewed literature, Asian immigrant children and adolescents reported that they enjoyed watching TV shows, listening to radio, and web surfing using their HL (Duff & Kim, 2012; Man, 2006; Sakamoto, 2006). Research revealed that those

Asian immigrant children and youths not only learned new vocabulary but also maintained linguistic knowledge in grammar and sentence structure in HL through engaging and entertaining multimedia. It indicates that they are familiar with such visual and auditory modalities to utilize their HL. Expanding on their familiarity with such multimedia, I recommend mobile messaging tools as a suitable and effective way for the offspring of Asian immigrants to communicate with other HL speakers beyond their immediate family members.

There are mobile applications for smart phones that provide one way to keep in touch with the family and solidify intergenerational ties. Kakao Talk ([www.kakao.com](http://www.kakao.com)), Line ([www.line.com](http://www.line.com)), and WeChat ([www.wechat.com](http://www.wechat.com)) are nationwide mobile message service systems in Korea, Japan, and China, respectively. The App Store (iPhones) and Google Play (Android phones) come as default methods for smart phone users to access these messaging platforms. When they click on the App Store or Google Play, then look up Kakao, Line, or WeChat, it takes only a few minutes to install a chosen application on their mobile phones. There are three benefits for using those mobile applications: cost-effectiveness, immediacy, and exchange that go beyond simple written texts. To illustrate, when those applications are downloaded and used with a Wi-Fi connection, anyone can connect and interact with HL speakers planet-wide and free of charge. Users can note whether interlocutors read a sent message or not, as it displays the time they access and read the message. When a message remains unread, it does not exhibit the time. They can utilize one-on-one communication, or create a group message to interact with multiple interlocutors. For example, when immigrant families try to figure out when a good time to visit their extend family in the homeland, they can invite as many family members as they wish for a group chat. Moreover, immigrant families can share their memories and celebrate occasions such as birthdays, talent shows at school, and

graduation ceremonies as these applications allow users to send picture and short audio or video files. They can even video chat with each other in real time. In other words, immigrant children can practice both receptive and productive language skills while they are communicating with their extended family using Kakao Talk, Line, and WeChat applications. While annual trips to their country of origin would be a great opportunity to see their family members in person and spend quality time together, not to mention a chance to immerse children in their HL speaking environment, utilizing such mobile application is a more cost effective way of connecting immediate and extended family, and can further contribute to intergenerational harmony.

By using messaging technology, Asian immigrant families could enhance the quality of HL maintenance and better nurture family ties.

***Online learning resources.*** Some Japanese families were found to use on-line resources such as Kodomo Challenge for their preschooler's HL maintenance and development (Caidi & Nomura, 2013). While Kodomo Challenge is an online subscription program that is designed for young learners of Japanese language, this idea of utilizing online learning resources could be broadened to include other HL learners regardless of their ethnicity or age. Utilization of online learning resources would allow Asian immigrant families to locate rich and varied learning materials that are age-appropriate and increase HL input and output.

There are quite a number of websites that allow immigrant children to enhance fluency in their ethnic language. For example, immigrant children and adolescents can make use of HL learning websites, which are designed for temporary residents, or immigrants who reside abroad. Those websites offer various learning resources that correspond to learners' proficiency level and interests. For example, Kosnet ([www.kosnet.go.kr/index.do](http://www.kosnet.go.kr/index.do)) provides pictures and explanations of Korean history, culture, and language. One of the sub categories, Korean language learning

(<http://www.kosnet.go.kr/kosnet/main/kosnetStudyMain010.do>) consists of self-testing to determine proficiency level, learning *Hangul*, and four lesson levels that are divided according to age group: preschoolers, children, adolescents, and adult HL learners. HL learners can download any learning materials from greetings to ethnic holidays in Korea free of charge once they sign up for the website. There are e-lectures on Korean culture: traditional music instruments, games, and dances. They have icons for each topic and when a user clicks on it, it plays short video clips that disseminate background knowledge and explain how to play those traditional musical instruments, games, or dances. There is also an open forum where online users exchange information or ask questions with regard to HL education. The website would allow HL learners to develop both linguistic competence and cultural awareness. Korean immigrant descendants would have greater opportunities to utilize their ethnic language, as they would be able to access multitudes of educational resources. Likewise, Chinese Central Television (CCTV), which is a television network in China, offers online Chinese lessons (<http://english.cntv.cn/learnchinese>). The page displays both Chinese and English. All the Chinese learning content is categorized by proficiency level: beginner, intermediate, advanced, and extensive learning. For example, there are short audio lessons on thematic dialogues, detailing tasks such as describing the weather, talking about hobbies, and going grocery shopping, for beginner learners. Another subcategory Travel in Chinese offers video lessons that teach Chinese culture and history of popular destinations for intermediate learners of Chinese language ([english.cntv.cn/program/learnchinese/travelinchinese/index.shtml](http://english.cntv.cn/program/learnchinese/travelinchinese/index.shtml)). Whereas this website is not specifically designed for HL learners of Chinese, immigrant children, regardless of their HL competence, could benefit from the online resources that are available on the website. Downloading audio and video



lessons, which cover topics from daily conversation to the history of China might stimulate a learner's interest in language learning as well as promote cultural awareness.

For Japanese immigrant families, Japanese-online ([www.japanese-online.com](http://www.japanese-online.com)), which was developed by Pacific Software Publishing, provides free service from the basics of writing and pronouncing letters to Japanese culture and customs, such as ethnic holidays, food, and travel. Learners can select topics of Japanese learning according to their proficiency level. For example, beginners can browse *basics* to gain knowledge about the writing systems (Hiragana, Katakana, and Kanji), pronunciation and verb conjugation. Intermediate learners could choose Topic Modifiers to learn grammar points, and Sentence Structures to practice to build full sentences. Then the last category Traditions includes both informative and entertaining themes, such as Japanese proverbs, superstition, and karaoke. While there are more English explanations and relatively short illustration in Japanese, using this website for Japanese learning would allow learners to enjoy diverse topics and further contribute to their fluency in Japanese.

Another way to locate online resources in HL could be streaming TV shows and movies on Netflix ([www.netflix.com](http://www.netflix.com)). Netflix is a provider of documentaries, TV shows, cartoons, and comedy, and users can watch them online or stream to electronic devices such as mobile phones, iPads, laptops, and TVs at a low cost. In Canada, the cost is moderate depending on the chosen plan (basic, standard, and premium). Parents could find HL films, documentaries, and TV dramas for their older children to enjoy, and select Netflix Kids to watch cartoons, children's shows and family movies for their younger children. HL learners with low competence would benefit from English subtitles, which are available for most of the content on Netflix.

By making use of the resources available online in the ethnic languages, the descendants of Asian immigrants could gain linguistic and cultural knowledge, and possibly increase HL use while they enjoy entertaining and useful media content.

**Heritage language school domain.** The home is the primary foundation for HL maintenance, but it is not the only resource. HL schools also play a role and these specific implications are addressed within HL school domain in the following. In this subsection, two approaches are discussed, including (a) collaboration between parents and school and (b) recognition of HL learners' linguistic and cultural variations.

***Collaboration between parents and school.*** Korean immigrants in Park's study (2011) emphasize correct use of honorific forms of speech. *Honorifics* are one of the most salient linguistic features of Korean language with a wide variety of vocabulary choices and syntax depending on interlocutor's age, social hierarchy, and the dynamics of family relations. For example, young people in general should use honorific forms of speech with older interlocutors. However, if one's boss is younger than oneself, it is required to use honorifics to boss because of social hierarchy in workforces. The same rule is applicable for the military. Anyone in the military cannot use informal vocabulary or sentences when he or she communicates with someone who is of higher rank, regardless of age. In family relations, it gets even more complicated. When one has an older sibling that is married to someone who is younger than oneself, honorifics should be used, as he or she is the spouse of an older sibling.

The dynamics of honorific use might be challenging and confusing for immigrant children as they may only have a few family members to practice with. Collaboration between parents and heritage language schools may contribute to proper use of honorifics among Korean immigrant children. Their collaboration could facilitate continual HL learning resources. As

reported in the review, Korean immigrant families emphasize correct honorific forms of speech (Park, 2011). HL schoolteachers could also address such a factor in their pedagogy, so that parental emphasis on HL education would align with what is being taught at school. In that way, Korean immigrant children would have more opportunities to practice formal language.

For instance, teachers could organize role-play activities that involve playing roles of varying ages and different social contexts among the participants. Students can create scripts for their play with teacher's supervision and act them out. For example, learners could play a doctor and a patient where they describe symptoms and offer prescriptions, or a tour guide for a group of students who come to Gyeongbokgung Palace in Seoul. Alternatively, teachers could have students perform a debate or discuss certain topics in a formal setting. To illustrate, students could debate whether speaking in English should be allowed in HL school. Students can advocate English use or exclusive HL use at the school, support their opinions with evidence, and then vote for a decision. It could be designed as a formal debate, or a discussion so that HL learners are required to use formal language in their HL. The combined efforts of parents and teachers at HL school would contribute to HL learners' development of formal language as well as enhance fluency overall.

***Recognition of HL learners' linguistic and cultural variations.*** Chinese immigrant families were reported to have stable ethnic communities and a large immigrant population compared to Korean or Japanese groups (Man, 2006). At first, this appears to favour the promotion of HL development and culture on the surface. However, issues with regard to HL maintenance and promotion among Chinese immigrants arise because China is one of the largest countries with 56 recognized ethnic groups. Their regional dialects and cultures within China are distinctive from each other as well. Despite the linguistic and cultural variation in the Chinese

immigrant population, the research in the review most often used the umbrella term Chinese to denote Mandarin Chinese, Cantonese, and Taiwanese Chinese altogether. These varieties of Chinese share some linguistic and cultural features to certain extent; however, considering all Chinese as one harmonious group is likely to promote neglect of their struggles and adaptation in HL education at the micro level. Unfortunately, the research that was accessed for the review did not explore such factors.

It should be noted that all the heritage language schools that are reported in the reviewed studies offer either Mandarin Chinese or Cantonese classes, respectively. Mandarin Chinese is the standard language and the language of instruction in the public schools in China whereas Cantonese is widely spoken in the southern China and Hong Kong. There are only two types of Chinese HL are being offered at school. Those Chinese immigrants who speak other regional dialects have to decide whether they want their children to learn Mandarin Chinese or Cantonese when the parents send them to HL school. The possibility of also learning a local ‘family’ dialect is the responsibility of the home. When Chinese immigrant children learn Mandarin Chinese or Cantonese at HL school, it does not directly conflict with the local dialect in the home because parents are likely to comprehend Mandarin, which is the standard language and the language of instruction in China, or Cantonese, which is the most widely spoken regional dialect in Southern China and Hong Kong. Learning one of the major dialects at school does not pose any barrier to parent-child communication using one of the major Chinese dialects.

However, when they only learn either Mandarin Chinese or Cantonese at school and its culture, which may not be the languages and cultures of their parents, attending HL school is not likely to promote family cohesion or cultural harmony in the family. HL schools, therefore,

could work toward validation of linguistic and cultural variations within Chinese immigrant groups in Canada by recognizing HL learners' linguistic and cultural variations.

Chinese HL schools need to value linguistic and cultural variations of HL learners in their curriculum and pedagogical approaches. Whether the language of instruction at HL school is Mandarin Chinese or Cantonese, schools could validate other types of HL and various cultures by organizing activities that promote minority cultures within China. For example, teachers could teach about the multiethnic diversity of China. They can use audio-visual aids, such as pictures or video clips to help learners better understand the content. It at least yields opportunities to learn China's diversity and multiculturalism in a school setting. Schools can also promote multiculturalism within Chinese immigrant groups by organizing activities such as exhibitions or multicultural days. HL learners could create posters of the region where their family comes from in China, bring pictures of their or their parents' culture, introduce cultural items, share ethnic food, or wear traditional costumes. In this way, Chinese immigrant children would be able to experience languages and cultures of China that extend beyond Mandarin or Cantonese, and gain knowledge about their parents' roots. Promoting cultural identity of immigrant descendants is also a way to motivate the learning of Chinese at school because it is reported that leaning HL enables them to understand their culture better and further fosters positive feelings toward their culture (Man, 2006).

### **Literacy Development**

Asian immigrant parents were reported to actively involve in their children's HL education. The degree of active parental involvement varied depends on the types of support, however. For example, in the literature that was reviewed there was far more attention on oral

language use than literacy in the home. There is evidence that Korean immigrant parents located reading materials for their children but the research did not report whether parents monitored reading activities (Kim, 2013). In this section, I (a) characterize some of the particulars of each of the writing systems and then describe activities that might be used (b) in the home domain or (c) in the school domain for the purpose of enhancing HL learning.

**The writing systems.** Both Chinese (Li, 2006b) and Japanese parents (Minami, 2013) expressed their struggles in promoting writing skills owing to the characteristics of using Chinese characters which constitute the entire writing system in Chinese, and the part of the writing system in Japanese. Korean immigrants did not report any struggles with writing activities in Korean, but this is not surprising as Korean *Hangul* is a much less complicated writing system to learn. Even so, the Korean language entails a great deal of vocabulary and idioms that are rooted in Chinese characters because Korean adopted Chinese characters as its writing system until the 15<sup>th</sup> century when Hunminjeongeum, which is Korean writing system (referred as Hangul later by Korean scholars) that was invented by Sejong the Great and his scholars. Sixty-five percent of modern Korean lexicons are Chinese character words or Sino-Korean, which refers to vocabulary that was influenced by Chinese characters (Sohn, 2006). Due to the extended time period of using Chinese characters as a writing system in Korea, comprehending Chinese characters serves as a vehicle to understand Korean language better.

Meanwhile, Chinese characters are used nationwide as a writing system in China but regional dialects differ greatly with a wide distribution of oral representations. Chinese immigrant parents report that fostering writing activities is strenuous because of its linguistic features: each character carries meaning and also has multiple meanings depending on combined character(s) (Li, 2006b). Moreover, one dot or stroke could entirely change the meaning. To

better support Chinese immigrant children's writing skills, orthographic variations in Chinese writing system should be considered. Whereas simplified Chinese characters are used in Mainland China, traditional Chinese characters are primarily used in southern China and Taiwan. Therefore, when promoting writing practices, immigrant parents need to locate relevant resources accordingly. For example, Chinese immigrant parents in Li's study (2006a) mention that they decided to teach Mandarin Chinese, which is the language that both parents comprehend as it is being taught at public school in China, to their children owing to their dissimilar linguistic backgrounds. In this case, parents would need to utilize simplified Chinese characters to promote writing practices. On the other hand, Cantonese immigrant families would have to facilitate the use of traditional Chinese characters.

In the case of Japanese language, there are three writing systems: Hiragana, Katakana, and Kanji. Japanese immigrant parents also stated that they struggled with encouraging their children to learn Kanji (Minami, 2013). It may be that Hiragana and Katakana are easy to learn and memorize, but Kanji acquisition is a more complicated and sophisticated learning process. Moreover, in Japanese writing, Kana and Kanji appear at the same time and are essential elements to build sentences. For example, "I am learning Japanese" appears as 私は日本語を習っています。 in Japanese. In my experience as a Japanese learner and teacher, I learned that beginner students acquire Kana (Hiragana and Katakana) first, and gradually increase their amount of Kanji acquisition when they start to learn sentence structure. My linguistic knowledge in Korean and experiences as a Chinese and Japanese learner has led me to reflect on the learning of characters. When I was learning characters, it entailed a great deal of rote memorization, and copying and tracing over and over again. It was a boring and demotivating way of learning Chinese characters. Then I found learning activities that were interesting and

helpful for Chinese character acquisition. Based on my experience, I would suggest that parents could encourage their children to learn four-character idioms as a means to promote writing practices and skills, which is illustrated within the home domain. Asian immigrant children would find learning characters through four-character idioms more enjoyable and informative than copying each character to memorize it, which may further contribute to learners' motivation and interest in character learning.

In the reviewed study, there was no report of how HL school promoted learners' literacy development - whether they struggled with encouraging students to read and write in HL, or resources available at school. HL school could foster learners' literacy development by providing a variety of reading materials, organizing individual and group activities that increase peer interaction while learners read and write in their HL, and inform parents and their children about their learning progress and areas they need to improve. I would suggest establishing an HL library at school and sending out report cards to promote literacy development in the heritage language school domain. In the following, implications are made in the home domain followed by HL school domain to give ideas on cultivating learning environment that could enhance Asian immigrant children and adolescents' literacy skills.

**Home domain: four-character idioms.** Four-character idioms are idiomatic expressions by using only four Chinese characters. Four-character idioms are more than just the representation of combining four characters into a memorable saying as it entails messages from ancient stories. For example, 沙上樓閣 literally means "a house that is built on sand." However, it is a figurative expression that describes an idea or a plan that is not plausible owing to lack of support or reasoning. For another example, 苦盡甘來 literally means, "when bitterness ends sweetness comes". Figuratively, it means when one overcomes struggles and hardships, one will



encounter pleasure and happiness. One idiomatic expression consists of only four characters, which might ease students' anxiety around Chinese character learning. Moreover they could find this learning activity enjoyable, as it is not only Chinese character acquisition, but also story telling time. For children of elementary or middle school age and above, learning Chinese characters through four-character idioms would contribute to effective literacy acquisition among children of Korean, Chinese, and Japanese immigrants as their languages are based on or largely influenced by Chinese characters.

**Heritage language school domain.** In this subsection, two modalities are discussed: (a) HL school library and (b) report cards.

*HL school library.* Research disclosed that Asian immigrant parents actively located reading materials at home for their children's literacy development, however it is inevitable that there could be limitations in terms of the number of books and the types of reading materials at home. It reminds me of my visit to McKenzie Elementary School for a classroom observation. The teacher took her grade 1 students to a school library, made sure everyone in class picked one book to read, and watched a short video clip about new books. The school library had a great selection of children's books similar to the children's book sections in the public libraries in Greater Victoria. I thought it was a practical way to encourage reading because the teacher did not just ask students to read a book, but she allocated time for watching a book promotion video and letting her students to borrow books. On the contrary, when I worked as a teacher at Korean heritage language school, they did not have a library at the school. There were bookshelves in every classroom, but they were primarily textbooks that were used at HL school or dictionaries and encyclopaedias. As a teacher I sometimes made copies of a chapter of a book, or downloaded Korean folk tales on my laptop for in-class reading activities. However, due to the

small selection of reading materials at school, students could not enjoy reading in Korean as much as they could have wished.

Reflecting on such experiences, I suggest that parents and HL school cooperate to establish HL libraries at school where HL learners could strengthen their literacy skills while enjoying rich and varied learning resources. To create HL library, parents could bring audio books, textbooks, encyclopaedias, flash cards, word puzzles, and other materials in HL available in their home to school to share. A broader range of print materials would assist heritage language schoolteachers to utilize age-appropriate materials in class and organize activities such as shared story reading. After having HL learners to read a book of their choice, the teacher can encourage them to read a book to one of their classmates. With young learners, it would enhance pronunciation, reading skills, and vocabulary expansion and increase peer-interaction in HL. As they read a book as a pair, they could help each other when they encounter the vocabulary they do not comprehend by guessing the meaning or ask for their teacher's help. With older students, teachers could ask them to create their own ending of the story. For example, after they read a book together, they could write a different ending of the story to share in class. It would be a motivating and fun activity as they come up with their own ending to give a different message or lesson about the story. Chinese immigrant adolescents reported that they felt a sense of belonging and comfort by speaking their ethnic language with peers (Belanger & Verkuyten, 2010). Moreover, Asian immigrant youths across the three ethnic groups mentioned that HL proficiency was a crucial component in their ethnic identity construction (Duff & Kim, 2012; Man, 2006; Noro, 2009).

HL school library would enhance HL learners' literacy skills when parents and the school cooperate to bring resources together and organize literacy activities that prompt learners'

interest and peer interaction. This would also be likely to contribute to a positive sense toward the HL learners' ethnic identity.

***Report Cards.*** Asian immigrant families reported that their children were benefiting from receiving formal HL education at HL school, such as learning the language, participating in cultural practices, and interacting with co-ethnic peers (Chow, 2004; Kawaguchi, 2014; Park, 2009). However, how the parents monitored and helped their children with what they learned at HL school remains unknown. To promote parent-teacher communication as well as cooperation, teachers could distribute report cards on a regular basis, which give HL learners qualitative feedback on their attitudes and participation in-class activities. As HL school is most likely the only milieu where HL learners receive formal HL education, teacher's feedback and evaluation of students' learning process would facilitate self-reflections of the learners and the adaptation of parental strategies in the maintenance and promotion of HL. For example, teachers could inform parents about the literacy activities at school, such as frequency of reading and writing activities, the number of books they read, types or topics of writing activities, and the recommendation of a list for reading at home. Teachers could also remark on areas where students need to improve their linguistic skills. To illustrate, students might be advised to expand their vocabulary to better understand reading materials, practice certain pronunciation, or write a diary to improve writing skills. Then parents and their children take their teachers' advice and work toward balanced competence in HL. Parents could help with their children's homework, monitor the diary by giving their children feedback, and practice choral reading to improve pronunciation.

Distribution of report cards would positively impact on parent-teacher communication and cooperation with regard to immigrant children's HL maintenance and literacy development.

### **Code-switching and Bilingualism**

Asian immigrant children and adolescents were found to code-switch depending on the interlocutors. Both Korean immigrant youths (Jeon, 2012) and Chinese immigrant adolescents (Man, 2006) reported to prefer English to HL with their siblings. Minami (2013) corroborates Jeon and Man's findings: there was a tendency among Japanese immigrant children and youths to use HL more consistently with the parents and spoke English with their siblings. Those Asian immigrant children and adolescents were growing up in English-dominant environment, and it may be seen as they are versatile with their choice of languages. However, HL use in the home domain is the most influential and significant milieu where immigrant children learn and practice the ethnic language. It is likely for immigrant children to lose their competence in HL or struggle with HL development when HL is not utilized effectively at home. Given the linguistic environment and greater exposure to English language due to their place of residency, Asian immigrant children would grow up to be bilingual when HL retention is encouraged in the family. To promote bilingualism while encouraging HL use, I suggest (a) negotiating family language policy at home and (b) allowing code-switching at HL school.

**Home domain: negotiating family language policy.** There should be considerations with regard to plausible positive outcomes of code-switching. For instance, Japanese mothers reported that they encouraged their children's Japanese acquisition and development for meaningful parent-child communication (Kawaguchi, 2014). However, owing to their family environment, family communication in Japanese is likely to nurture mother-child relationship while non-Japanese father is neglected. When their children spoke Japanese to their mother and switched to English with their father, it might foster meaningful communication between both parents and child(ren).

It may indicate that Japanese immigrant families might need to negotiate their family language policy and allow their children's code-switching while HL use is encouraged simultaneously. For example, parents could make an effort toward promoting bilingualism, which facilitates more effective family communication. They can decide to speak Japanese during the week, and then switch to English on the weekend. As they live in English-dominant environment outside the home, they can allocate more days for Japanese communication to ensure the opportunities to utilize HL. By speaking English at home on the weekend, Japanese mothers can develop competence in English, and fathers can connect with their children better. Effective family communication should contribute to meaningful conversation among all the family members, not only between the Japanese mother and child. The negotiation of family language policy could be applicable for Korean and Chinese immigrant families who are reported to have parents with same ethnic backgrounds in the reviewed study. Regardless of their relatively homogenous family environment, their children might feel more comfortable communicating in English as they are primarily exposed to English environments outside the home. They might feel anxious or frustrated by having to speak HL consistently at home. For example, they may find speaking English or asking questions when it comes to school homework or activities at school because they learn school subjects in English. Limited language switching would be useful for both parents and children: (a) parents could utilize English to mitigate linguistic gap between parents and children; (b) children could communicate more effectively.

**Heritage language school domain-indulgence of bilingualism.** Japanese immigrant families were distinctive from their Korean or Chinese counterparts in the reviewed study because some of the families consisted of a Japanese mother and a non-Japanese father whose mother tongue was primarily English. Therefore, Japanese immigrant children were growing up

in a bilingual and bicultural family environment. HL schoolteachers and administrators need to take linguistic and cultural variations within the Japanese immigrant families into consideration in their curriculum. There was evidence in the review that the use of Japanese helped to enrich the bond between mothers and children (Kawaguchi, 2014). The extensive use of Japanese in the home is important for HL maintenance, but there is the risk that this could impede the relationship with the non-Japanese parent if Japanese HL learners are expected to communicate exclusively in Japanese. Furthermore, it may provoke a sense of resistance toward utilizing Japanese language exclusively and that would negatively affect motivation.

HL school could encourage Japanese immigrant children's bilingualism, rather than reinforcing exclusive use of Japanese language. In my experience of teaching Korean at Victoria Korean Language School, I have noticed that learners from families with mixed heritage, for example a Canadian father and a Korean mother, a Chinese father and a Korean mother, or a Korean father and a Japanese mother, seemed to be more prone to use English in class and at HL school in general. When I asked them which language they use most frequently at home, they answered that it was English with the non-Korean parent, or in the presence of both parents. This may have contributed to the fact that they used more English to ask questions and build sentences such as slipping English words in Korean sentences. Reflecting on this experience, I suggest that one way of encouraging bilingualism among Japanese HL learners would be accepting the use of mixing in English when students struggle with expressing themselves in the HL or asking questions about the meanings of the vocabulary. This recommendation is equally relevant to all three ethnic groups. Although there is no report of mixed heritage families in the reviewed studies of Korean and Chinese immigrant groups, their children are also exposed to HL

and English simultaneously and it affects their linguistic development. As previously mentioned, code-switching is a good example of their bilingual patterns of language use.

Teachers could allow students to use English when they do not know equivalent vocabulary in HL. For example, when students are asked to introduce their hobbies in class, they can ask questions such as, “How do I say reading books in Korean?” or “I like listening to music. In this way, learners can use English, which eventually promotes the development of HL in class. For another example, teachers could allow students to use English to generate ideas for discussion or writing activities. Students can make notes and roughly illustrate their thoughts in English to develop basic structures of their writing. As the research revealed that Asian immigrant children across the three ethnic groups are exposed to English-dominant environment once formal schooling starts (Kawaguchi, 2013; Kim, 2013; Li, 2006a), it could indicate that HL learners have a wider range of vocabulary and better organize their thoughts in English than their ethnic languages. Therefore it would be helpful for them to utilize English to write a rough description to generate ideas, and then work on first draft in HL. Promoting bilingualism in the HL school could positively affect learners’ HL competence.

Another way of promoting bilingualism at HL school would be creating a designated area for English use. Young HL learners and learners with low HL competence might feel overwhelmed if they are forced to exclusively use their ethnic language at HL school. They might not know how to express themselves in HL or ask many questions owing to lack of vocabulary, phonological awareness, or literacy skills. To help those learners, HL schools could have designated areas for English use. HL schools could allow learner to speak English in the school administrator’s office to ask questions about school events and homework, or ask for help

when they feel sick. Allowing code-switching at HL school would assist students' HL learning rather than causing impediment in HL development.



### **Concluding Reflection**

As a researcher, it was strenuous to synthesize data from research for a few reasons. Twenty-five studies out of thirty reviewed studies adopted qualitative research methods, and the number of participants was as small as two to nine at most. Because of the small sample size and the geographic location of where data was collected, which were only five cities in Canada, (Calgary, Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver and Victoria), voices of Asian immigrant families in other cities and who were not included in the studies remain unheard. Moreover, age-mix in all three ethnic groups and racial-mix within Chinese immigrants made analysis of literature challenging, as it required interpreting data by deconstructing variables in the study.

Nonetheless, I learned valuable findings through the review. Asian immigrant parents in Canada appeared to be enthusiastic for their children's HL maintenance and development. However, they were not reported to seek external support when they utilized learning resources and employed teaching methods. Parents could cooperate with HL schools and ethnic community to better support HL retention and create an enjoyable learning environment for their children. Asian immigrant families highlighted the importance of maintaining their ethnic languages and promoting cultural awareness that further contributed to positive ethnic identity formation. Given their place of residency and English-dominant living environment, parents need to negotiate their family language from HL only policies to promoting bilingualism to nurture balanced linguistic development between HL and English. Lastly, I would like to highlight how crucial HL maintenance is for Asian immigrant families. Their language promotes effective family communication and family harmony. Further it not only connects them to their homeland but also contributes to linguistic and cultural diversity in Canada.

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