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**Chinese Language Use by School-aged Chinese Australians:  
From a Dual-track Culturalisation Perspective**

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## **Abstract**

Over the past decades, the topic of Chinese immigrants has attracted wide attention and increasing academic interest, due to the rapid growth of Chinese immigration across the globe. However, many existing viewpoints are mainstream-centric, homogeneous and dated. To overcome the current research problems and elaborate Chinese immigrants' culturalisation process through one important factor—language use—this research takes school-aged Chinese Australians as a case study, analysing their use of Chinese language from a dual-track culturalisation perspective.

The 2016 Australian Census reveals that over 1.2 million people in the country claim their Chinese ancestry (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2018). Among them, people who regard Mandarin and Cantonese as the most preferred language to speak at home are 46% and 22% respectively, which jointly contributes to the prevalence of Chinese language use in the Chinese community in Australia. This drew our attention to why and how school-aged Chinese Australians learn and use Chinese language and how its use influences the construction and reconfiguration of their ethnic and cultural identity.

Drawing upon interviews and participant observation, this study addresses the research questions above by presenting the complex decision-making process of Chinese immigrant families and the dynamic relations between the broad cultural environment at macro level, the Chinese community in Australia and Chinese families at micro level, and school-aged Chinese Australians themselves. The findings of this research project contribute to our understanding of international migrant children's culturalisation process, through their language use and multidimensional identity negotiation, and highlight school-aged Chinese Australians' agency in the transformation of the immigrant community in Australia via their dual-track language practices. Though research findings in this study are based on the case of Chinese-Australian children and adolescents, many aspects of their experience could be shared by immigrants in other age groups and of other ethnicities, due to the representativeness of

Chinese immigrants as one of the largest immigrant groups and Australia as a typical immigrant country.

## **Declaration**

This is to certify that

- (i) The thesis comprises only my original work towards the degree of PhD;
- (ii) Due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used; and
- (iii) This thesis is fewer than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, figures and references.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AEF	Asia Education Foundation
CASS	Chinese Academy of Social Sciences
CHL	Chinese heritage language
VCE	Victorian Certificate of Education

# Chapter 1 Introduction and Literature Review

## 1.1 Introduction

### 1.1.1 Research background

Australia is an immigration country, with 28.2% of its resident population, estimated at 6.7 million, born overseas (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2017). Since many of the immigrants keep in contact with their homes, their diverse cultures and languages other than English are brought to Australia. This not only poses a challenge to the local cultural and linguistic environment but also stirs up significant controversies about the language diversity, motivation to maintain and development bilingual skills, and language-ethnicity relations.

Within the immigrant community in Australia, the Chinese community and Chinese immigrants are significant parts of 'multicultural Australia' (Clyne & Jupp, 2011, p. 54).

Looking back to the long history of Chinese migration to Australia, there has only been a very rapid and significant increase in the Chinese-speaking population since the settlement of about 45,000 Chinese students in the early 1990s (Gao & Zhang, 2017). This helped Australia divert its emphasis of immigrant intake to educational qualifications, skills and the capacity to invest (Gao, 2017). Since then, Australia has been witnessing China becoming the second-biggest migrant-sending country, with 8.3% of overseas-born Australians from China (ABS, 2016). The new migrants arriving after the late 1980s and early 1990s tend to be well educated and skilled, which not only changes the population composition of the Chinese community in Australia, but also reconfigures the environment of language use, cultural consumption and ethnicity construction.

The 2016 Australian Census reveals that over 1.2 million people in the country claim their Chinese ancestry (ABS, 2018). Among them, people who regard Mandarin Chinese<sup>1</sup> and Cantonese as the most preferred language to speak at home are 46% and 22% respectively. In addition, a report released by ABS reveals that 21% of Australians speak a language besides English at home, and among them Mandarin is the most common language spoken at home (ABS, 2017). It is spoken by one in every 40 Australians. Moreover, only 42% of overseas-born Australians spoke only English at home in 2016, while 8.3% spoke Mandarin, and 3.5% spoke Cantonese.

This jointly contributes to the prevalence of Chinese language use in the Chinese community in Australia. Not only adult immigrants from China and Chinese-speaking areas speak Chinese, but also some second-generation Chinese-Australian children use Chinese as one of mainly used languages to communicate, consume cultural products, and socialise. The significant number of people claiming their Chinese ancestry and the high frequency of use of Chinese languages draw our attention to the issue of Chinese language as a heritage language used by Chinese immigrants in Australia.

With the rapid development of China, families in the Chinese community tend to send their children to learn the Chinese language and usually create a supportive environment for their bilingual skills to develop. However, a number of tensions exist between the two countries and Chinese-Australian relations indeed have had a rollercoaster time, which raises new questions for Chinese immigrants in Australia. How immigrant children who grow up against this background and their families respond to the continuously changing environment through

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<sup>1</sup> Mandarin is a commonly used term in Australia to refer to the Standard Chinese language. Standard Chinese, which is based on the Beijing dialect, is the official national spoken language in China and serves as a lingua franca within the Chinese context (Chinese Academy of Social Sciences [CASS], 2012).

their language choice and language practice have not been systematically examined—a gap this research aims to fill.

This study examines the use of Chinese language by school-aged Chinese Australians from a dual-track culturalisation perspective. Drawing upon interviews, participant observation and documentary analysis, this study addresses the questions of why and how school-aged Chinese Australians learn and use Chinese language in multiple social settings, and how they construct their understanding of language and identities by involving themselves in this process.

The study is needed and important because it contributes to our understanding of international migrant children's culturalisation process, through their language use and multidimensional identity negotiation, and highlights school-aged Chinese Australians' agency in participating in the transformation of the immigrant community in Australia via their dual-track language practices. This research regarding Chinese language use by school-aged Chinese Australians is more than a traditional topic examining the immigrants' language acquisition. Rather, it takes social changes happening in both host country and sending country into consideration, examining school-aged Chinese Australians' language use and their culturalisation process via language use. As an interdisciplinary study, it elaborates how these children as reflexive subjects respond to the change of social and cultural environment via language choice and use. Therefore, this research not only focuses on the debate about the education of immigrant children from the educational perspective, and on heritage language maintenance as a linguistic discipline, but also devotes itself to participating in the discussion in the fields of sociology of migration and ethnic studies.

### **1.1.2 Terminology and scope of the study**

The phrase Chinese language in this research mainly refers to Chinese heritage language. The term heritage language ‘came into widespread use in 1977, with the establishment of the Heritage Languages Program in the province of Ontario’ in Canada (Cummins, 2014, p. 2). At that time, ‘multiculturalism’ and ‘multilingualism’ emerged as both a national policy in Canada and an analytical perspective for studying related issues (Burayidi, 2015, p. 395; Turner, 2006, p. 47). Although the concept of heritage language has a relatively short history, there were similar concepts about these languages and they were often expressed as immigrant language, community language and home language (Wiley et al., 2008), with a relatively large body of literature on it.

Chinese heritage language shares some general characteristics with other heritage languages while keeping its own special features. Specifically, Chinese heritage language, in this research, includes Mandarin and any Chinese dialects that are learnt overseas, intentionally or unintentionally. It is only kept as a minority language in family or community. The level of ethnic Chinese immigrants’ Chinese language competence varies. Some people may be able to speak, read, and write the language; others may only speak or understand it when spoken to. Some may not understand the language but are part of a family or community where it is spoken (Kelleher, 2010). However, no matter how proficient Chinese Australians’ Chinese language use is, it is considered a kind of heritage language. By maintaining their Chinese language skills they can maintain their connection with their family members, the Chinese society as well as their Chinese identity.

School-aged Chinese Australians can be understood by two separate key words: school-aged and Chinese Australians. School-aged, in this research, refers to an age group when young Chinese Australians have to attend primary school and secondary school. This includes

children aged five to 12<sup>2</sup> and young adolescents aged 13 to 16<sup>3</sup>. This age group has been chosen because it is the important time for them to develop their language skills. How they negotiate between Australian identity and Chinese identity based on the use of different language is more typical of this age group than of Chinese immigrants of other age groups.

Chinese Australians refer to Australians of Chinese ethnicity. In regard to ethnicity, this research chose both Australian-born children and adolescents of Chinese ethnicity, and those children and adolescents who immigrated to Australia in their early and middle childhood, who are called ‘1.75 generation’<sup>4</sup> migrants and ‘1.5 generation’ migrants (Rumbaut, 2004, p. 1167), but excludes ‘1.25 generation migrants’ (Rumbaut, 2004, p. 1167), who immigrated to Australia in their adolescent years. This is due to more similarities shared by 1.75 generation and 1.5 generation immigrants with their second-generation counterparts than 1.25 generation immigrants (Rumbaut, 2004). Also, those who are born in an interracial-marriage family involving ethnic Chinese will also be considered in this research project. Details of participants are introduced in Chapter 3, which is focused on research methodology.

### 1.1.3 Originality and significance

This research is valuable and original, both theoretically and empirically. On one hand, it contributes to filling in the gaps about immigrants’ cultural practices of Chinese language in the existing literature, and re-examining the issues of motivation and perceptions about

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<sup>2</sup> According to Kail (2011), age-related development periods are new born (aged zero to four weeks), infant (aged four weeks to one year), toddler (aged 12 months to 24 months), pre-schooler (aged two to five years), school-aged children (aged six to 12 years) and adolescents (aged 13 to 19). Since it is common in Australia that many children attend Chinese class half to one year earlier than day school, which means that children usually attend primary school in day school when they are six while they tend to attend the Year 1 Chinese class (or pre-schooling class) when they are five, this study includes children aged from five years old.

<sup>3</sup> This study includes adolescents younger than 16 years old because it is common that they graduate from middle school in this age group. Young adolescents in this age group face pressure from examination to university, which is an important factor in their decision-making process about language choice. This will be discussed thoroughly in following chapters.

<sup>4</sup> Based on Rumbaut (2004)’s classification, those immigrants who arrive as children can be further refined into three groups, depending on whether their migration occurred during early childhood (ages 0-5), middle childhood (6-12) or adolescence (13-17).

language and ethnicity. This provides valuable experience and implications to Chinese heritage language educators, learners and speakers to better teach and use Chinese heritage language, as well as to social policy makers to formulate sensible policies about education, language maintenance and cultural diversity.

On the other hand, this research re-examines the existing theoretical explanations of Chinese language use in immigration communities and points out their shortcomings and inappropriateness to be applied in this research, before putting forward a new concept: dual-track culturalisation. This concept and framework help us understand Chinese language use and maintenance by overseas ethnic Chinese people theoretically. The core idea of this theoretical explanation is to understand the special cultural and linguistic circumstances faced by school-aged Chinese Australians, and their efforts to keep both Chinese language and English language in multicultural Australia. Therefore, this research is of originality and significance.

#### **1.1.4 Overview of the study**

Overall, this research is motivated by the observation of increasing Chinese population in Australia and their culturalisation via their language practices. To reveal how immigrants' culturalisation process is conducted via their language use and language choice, this study takes Chinese-Australian children and adolescents as an example, analysing how these second-generation, 1.75 generation and 1.5 generation migrants learn and use Chinese as a heritage language and how they perceive themselves through their language use and maintenance.

The thesis comprises eight chapters. The first chapter is a two-part introduction, with the first part providing the research background, its scope and relevance. The remainder of this chapter provides a critical literature review, broadly examining immigrants' language

practice in main immigration countries and narrowing down by contextualising this issue in Chinese community in other major immigration countries and in Australia. Statements of problems and research questions are also presented in this chapter.

Chapter 2 is concerned with how this research project is designed, which includes two important parts: theoretical framework and methodologies. This research puts forward an innovative theoretical framework, which is ‘dual-track culturalisation’ theory. This framework considers the special characteristics of the cultural environment that school-aged Chinese immigrants are immersed in and contextualises this issue in the Chinese community in Australia. This chapter also makes clear the methodologies that the research applies and how the researcher collects, analyses and manages data.

Chapter 3 is an analysis of motivations of these children’s and adolescents’ learning and using behaviours. It attempts to analyse school-aged Chinese Australians’ motivation for learning and using Chinese as heritage language from a new perspective. Compared with the previous studies, which explored this issue from a utilitarian angle, this research tends to emphasise the culture-oriented function of heritage language. This chapter also considers the conformity to community practices that motivates children, adolescents and their parents to learn and to use the Chinese language. The complexity and dynamics of motivational factors are also analysed

Chapter 4 looks at these children and adolescents’ learning process of Chinese language. It shifts its attention to the learning process of Chinese as a heritage language. Apart from providing analysis about school-aged Chinese Australian’s classroom learning behaviours, this chapter also examines the change of their language preference and the continuity and non-continuity of their Chinese language learning process. The chapter also provides an analysis from linguistic and pedagogical perspectives.

Chapter 5 moves on to examine school-aged Chinese Australians' cultural use of the Chinese language. It examines how young Chinese Australians use Chinese language as a kind of cultural practice, which is almost under-documented in the existing studies. Specifically, this chapter explores how young Chinese Australians use Chinese language to communicate, to consume cultural products and to be involved in the social activities associated with Chinese culture and issues.

The sixth chapter extends the discussion of Chinese-Australian children's and adolescents' perception of language, examining how, after learning and using Chinese, they perceive Chinese and form their reflexive ideas of languages. This chapter classifies them into four types according to their perceptions and behaviours regarding language learning and use, and analyses the mutually influenced relationship between cultural environment, family, immigrant children and their language ideology. The discussion provides insight into the agency of Chinese transnational immigrant children in forming and reconfiguring their perception of languages.

Chapter 7 examines the identity issues of these children. Based on the analyses of Chinese-Australian children's motivations to learn Chinese, their learning and using behaviours of Chinese and their perception of Chinese, this chapter explores how the Chinese language influences children's identity formation and reconstruction in multiple dimensions, including self-classification, observed identity and reflected ethnic identity. This chapter suggests that apart from being one of the characteristics of interaction-based observed race, language also plays an important role in the formation of ethnic and cultural identity in various dimensions. This role mainly acts as a covert influential mediation, rather than a determinative factor in children's negotiation between their dual cultural identities.

Chapter 8 concludes this project with a summary of the research findings, including motives, learning process, cultural use, language ideology and ethnic identity formation. This chapter highlights the theoretical significance and empirical contribution of this research and points out the implications for studies in related fields. Though this study takes Chinese-Australian children and adolescents as main research subjects, many aspects of their experience regarding language use and culturalisation could be shared by young immigrants of other backgrounds.

## **1.2 Literature review**

The literature review of this research project comprises three parts. Since Chinese is a minority language in Australia and it is mainly used by members of the Chinese-Australian community, this review begins with a re-examination of studies on ethnic minority language situations, especially the use and maintenance of such languages, in major immigration countries. The aim is to present a general picture of how minority languages in multilingual circumstances have been studied so far and to position this study in the larger context of recent scholarship on the minority language issues in immigration countries. This section is followed by a review of research of Chinese language use and maintenance in major immigration countries, such as the US, Canada, and New Zealand. It pays attention to theoretical explanations for the major topics that this research focuses on, including motivation, learning process, cultural use, language ideology and ethnic identity. The purpose of the second section is not only to understand how Chinese, as a minority language, has been used and maintained in the language environment where another language is the predominantly spoken language, but also with the aim to critically assess whether the existing theoretical explanations are suitable and appropriate to guide this research project. The third part of this review contextualises this issue in the Chinese community in Australia, focusing

on the literature on the use of Chinese as a heritage language by school-aged ethnic Chinese Australians.

### **1.2.1 Immigrant language situation in immigration countries**

Though human migration has a long history, beginning with ‘the movement of *Homo erectus* out of Africa across Eurasia about 1.75 million years ago’ (McKirdy, 2015, p. 18), the pace of migration accelerated due to the Industrial Revolution in the late 18th century. This phenomenon continues to spread around the world today. The salient migration population evokes scholarly interest to explore migration issues under various themes, such as immigrant education (Li, 2015; McCarthy & Vickers, 2012; Walqui, 2000), sociolinguistics (Clyne, 2003; Extra & Gorter, 2001; Menard-Warwick, 2009), development of community (Lu & Zong, 2017), cultural studies (Cameron, 2004; Collier, 2013), economic effects (Halkias, Thurman, Caracatsanis, & Harkiolakis, 2016; Simon, 1999), policy formulation (Hammar, 1985; Klusmeyer & Papademetriou, 2009; West, 2010), demographic transition (Haug, Compton, & Courbage, 2002), social integration (Wang, Zong, & Li, 2012), and so on. Within the huge volume of previous studies, several research perspectives, such as cultural studies, immigrant education and sociolinguistics, have drawn attention and are more related to this research project. This part first critically reviews the existing literature on immigration from the three perspectives mentioned above and then attempts to provide some implications for the discussions about Chinese language use as an immigrant language in the following sections.

#### **1.2.1.1 Literature from multicultural and multilingual perspectives**

Historically, an assimilationist approach was what most of the major immigrant countries, such as Canada, Australia, the US, adopted to tackle immigration issues. Immigrants who cross boundaries and bring with them diverse cultures and languages are required and

encouraged to assimilate to the pre-existing society. To be assimilated, some immigrants abandoned their own behaviours, languages, customs and beliefs but accepted the ‘so-called’ mainstream cultures, with the hope that they would become ‘indistinguishable from native-born citizens in their speech, dress, recreation, and way of life generally’ (Banting & Kymlicka, 2006, p. 54). This trend did not reverse until the late 1960s and early 1970s, when increasing numbers of immigrants to these countries were from non-European cultural backgrounds.

Multiculturalism as an alternative national policy started in Canada in 1971 (Cameron, 2004), followed by Australia in 1973 (Levey, 2008) and then most members of the European Union. Though there were some exceptional countries, such as France, that retains an assimilationist conception, and most countries of northern Europe that have already well ‘contained large numbers of foreigners’ (Banting & Kymlicka, 2006, p.55-56), the trend from assimilation to multiculturalism and multilingualism generally happened in most immigration countries. In accordance with the national policies, multiculturalism and multilingualism also become an important and innovative analytical point of view to examine the immigration issues.

Nevertheless, there are some problems within the existing literature, which analysed immigrants from multicultural and multilingual perspectives. One notable problem is that though the merits of learning and maintaining the immigrant language have been well documented in the existing literature (Baker, 2003; Cho, 2000; Cho, Cho, & Tse, 1997; He & Xiao, 2008; McGinnis, 2005a; Mu, 2014, 2015a; Tse, 2001), and there are many advocates for the protection of immigrant languages in the immigration countries, it is not easy for people of host countries to sympathise with immigrants. It is suggested that heritage language enables minority language speakers to gain academic and economic benefits, to keep intimate connections with family members, especially senior members, as well as to help to construct

their cultural identity and retain their cultural roots. Because of these benefits, immigrants fight against the cultural and language integration to protect their own cultures, especially immigrant languages all over the world. In the European context, all attempts to maintain the Westslavic minor language in Lower Lusatia should be concentrated on to guarantee their mother tongue (Krčmová, 2010); Galician language protection was also conducted in Spain (Krčmová, 2010). The necessity to preserve Spanish as a heritage language in the United States has also been explored in the existing literature (Beaudrie, 2016; Beaudrie & Fairclough, 2012; Delgado, 2009; Roca, 2003; Rose, 2008). In Australia, many language reports and policies have documented voices against monolingualism that have supported Asian language diversity (Clyne & Kipp, 1997; Djité, 1994; Rudd, 1994; Scarino, 2011).

However, not only do ‘educators in Canada and elsewhere ... not view the development of students’ heritage language skills as part of their job mandate’ (Cummins, 2014, p. 1), but the mainstream language speakers could not easily sympathise with heritage language users who are at risk of loss of cultural belonging as well. Few of the policy-makers who belong to the mainstream culture step into immigration communities to deepen their understanding of immigrant lives and face the complexity of immigrant communities. Therefore, multiculturalism and multilingualism are new perspectives to be considered in dealing with immigrant issues in the past, but policy-makers could not develop these ideas within their own context.

Furthermore, host people find it not easy to sympathise with immigrants because they consider immigration issues as being marginal. It seems difficult to achieve equality between mainstream cultures and minority cultures. From assimilationist approach to multiculturalism policy, people of mainstream society with both attitudes tried to intervene in the culture of the minority groups. The influence of the host culture and language introduced to the immigrant

groups could not easily fade away. It is because of their mainstream-centric ways of thinking that it is not easy for them to understand the harsh place where immigrants are situated. They either ignore the difficulties of maintaining their heritage language—which may be led by the inherent difference between different language families—or underestimate the significant impact that English, as a predominantly spoken language in many Western countries, and the proposed lingua franca by many scholars (Cogo, 2008; Dewey, 2007; Elder & Davies, 2006; House, 2003; Jenkins, 2009, 2012; Kirkpatrick, 2007; Seidlhofer, 2013), brings to immigrant language learning and maintaining. Therefore, taking this perspective to analyse immigrants' culture and language is unsuitable, especially for immigrants who are influenced by both home culture and host culture equally.

### **1.2.1.2 Literature from an educational perspective**

Because of the fact that immigrants are increasingly from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and the benefits of maintaining immigrant culture and language, the existing literature has documented bilingual education programs as a seemingly feasible approach to tackle the issues of immigration language and culture.

The previous studies have stated that bilingual education programs are conducted widely in most immigration countries, both in day school and in community school. Since 1999, when the first National Conference on Heritage Languages in America was held at Long Beach, California, scholarship on heritage language education has expanded; this refers to the teaching of languages other than English to ethnolinguistic minorities for whom the language is heritage (García, Zakharia, & Otcu, 2012). A great deal of research has described the condition of involving heritage language into day-school education systems in the United States (Beaudrie, 2009, 2011; Ingold, Rivers, Tesser, & Ashby, 2002; Trifonas & Aravossitas, 2014) and Canada (Cummins, 1983, 1992; Danesi, McLeod, & Morris, 1993;

Duff, 2007, 2008; Duff & Li, 2013). Countries in Europe are also increasing their teaching of Asian languages (Henry, 2012), such as Sweden, which has announced that Chinese will be taught in all Swedish schools by 2020 (Asia Education Foundation [AEF], 2012).

The existing research also examines the accessibility of immigrant language schooling through community school in many countries and the significant influence of community schools on heritage language maintenance (Chao, 1997; Chinen & Tucker, 2005; Fishman & Peyton, 2001; Hornberger, 2005; Maloof, Rubin, & Miller, 2006; Nordstrom, 2016). In 1986, more than 220,000 pupils were studying more than 50 different languages in government-funded part-time ethnic schools and insertion classes in Australia (Clyne, 1991). In the United States, ethnic groups have historically set up and maintained educational institutions to support the teaching of their languages and cultures (Bradunas & Topping, 1988). Apart from receiving schooling through day school and community school, heritage language learners and speakers also maintain their heritage language through some other cultural practices at home with family members (Bayley & Schechter, 2003; Cho et al., 1997; Oh & Fuligni, 2010; Park & Sarkar, 2007) and in communities with peer groups (Cho, 2000; Kondo-Brown, 2006).

However, the previous studies examined this issue too positively. Though young immigrants' bilingual ability is well documented in the existing literature, few studies have examined whether the proficiency of dual languages—the mainstream language and heritage language—are at the same level. They roughly generalised that both educational institutions and the language policy-makers have been aware of the importance of the development of bilingual ability and the protection of heritage language. However, they seem less concerned with whether the dual language abilities are to an equal standard and how difficult it is for immigrants to maintain their heritage language. Moreover, the existing literature, with the

educational perspective, overly focuses on what happens in the classroom, with little attention paid to the immigrants' language use and maintenance outside of the classroom. Few studies provide observations and explanations of immigrants' cultural use of their heritage language and how they perceive themselves via the use of language, which are also informal ways through which immigrants could practise and maintain their language and culture, as well as construct their language perceptions and ethnic and cultural identities.

### **1.2.1.3 Literature from a sociolinguistic perspective**

The sociolinguistic perspective is also a popular way to analyse the issues of immigrant language within the existing literature on immigrants. Previous studies have explored the interactional effect of some aspects of society, including individuals' behaviours, cultural norms and beliefs on their language use from a sociolinguistic perspective in different contexts, such as in Sweden (Boyd, 2001), Germany (Gogolin & Reich, 2001), the Netherlands (Van Der Avoird, Broeder, & Extra, 2001) and the United States (Tamasi & Antieau, 2014; Leikin, Schwartz, & Tobin, 2011). The motivation for immigrant language learning and maintenance (Fielding, 2015; Kondo-Brown, 2006; Menard-Warwick, 2009), the relations between heritage language and cultural identity (Parra, 2016; Preece, 2016), language use of different social classes (Preece, 2016), etc. have been documented in the current literature.

The existing literature, though illuminating, did not to provide a systematic analysis of immigrants' language use outside the scope of classroom with the consideration of social change. The cultural use of immigrant language in the settings of home and community is also an essential component of assessing the situation of immigrant language use and maintenance, especially for the immigrant groups in large population size, such as Chinese language in Australia (Mu, 2015a) and Spanish language in the United States (Beaudrie &

Fairclough, 2012). It is worthwhile exploring their cultural behaviours and practices, including how they use their heritage language, such as chatting online with friends, socialising and consuming media information.

Another problem is that immigrants' difficulties in maintaining and using their heritage language were often overlooked in the previous studies. The difficulties could be specified as the large difference between languages of different language families and the threat of English as a global language. For example, English is classified as an Indo-European language and is an official language or a national language in many Western countries, such as the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada. However, despite Hindi and Bengali being subordinate to Indo-European family, most Asian languages are in other language families, with Chinese in Sino-Tibetan family, Indonesian and Bahasa Melayu in Austronesian family, and the division of Korean and Japanese is still controversial. The phonology, grammatical rules and writing systems of different language families have huge disparities, which brings significant challenge for immigrants. However, the difficulty was rarely documented in the previous research.

Moreover, globalisation and the rapid development of technology strengthen the linguistic imperialism of English as a global language. 'English as the global language has a special position in the worldwide constellation of languages and is generally held in high prestige' (Gorter, Zenotz, & Cenoz, 2014, p. 3). However, current research did not take English out of the equation when it considered immigrants' learning and the maintenance of both English and heritage languages.

### **1.2.2 Chinese language use in major immigration countries**

For a long time 'China has been the single largest provider of immigrants across the globe' (Li, 2015, p. 1). Academic interest in this salient population has led to a number of attempts

to explore the complexity of Chinese immigration and diaspora from different disciplinary backgrounds (Collins, 2002; Dudley, Mao, & Yu, 1994; Holmes, 2004; Kuah, 2006; Kuhn, 2008; Lim, 1983; Liu, 1998; Nonini & Ong, 1997; Tan, 2004, 2013; Wang, 1993; Yao, 2004; Zheng, Sang, & Wang, 2004). Within the existing literature that analyses the Chinese diaspora, few have paid attention to the fact that ‘language is an integral part of Chinese migration and the building of the Chinese diaspora and diasporic identities’ (Li, 2015, p. 1), linking Chinese language use with formation and transformation of Chinese communities (Ang, 2005; Stenberg, 2015; J. Wang, 2015). This part first critically reviews the current position of Chinese language use in various parts of the world, followed by a thematic discussion of the existing literature and the current theoretical explanations.

### **1.2.2.1 The current situation of Chinese language use as a heritage language**

In addition to sharing general commonalities with other heritage languages, Chinese heritage language has its own specificities (He, 2008a). First, the complexity of Chinese language has been documented in the existing literature (Curdt-Christiansen & Hancock, 2014; Wong & Xiao, 2010). Chinese language ‘subsumes numerous dialects which are grouped under Wu, Xiang, Gan, Min, Cantonese, Hakka, and Mandarin’, many of which are mutually ‘incomprehensible’ (He & Xiao, 2008, p. 3). Phonologic rules, grammatical structure and textual use vary depending on which country or region ethnic Chinese immigrants are from and what dialects they use. In terms of writing, there are two writing systems: simplified Chinese characters that are used in mainland China and traditional Chinese characters that are used widely in Taiwan, Hong Kong and other regions, which also brings a serious challenge for learning and using Chinese heritage language.

Second, the ever-changing international situation and immigrants’ composition may reconfigure overseas Chinese people’s perception of the role Chinese language use plays in

their transnational life. The recent growth of Chinese socio-economic and socio-political power in the world has ‘increased the demand for learning Chinese, both as a heritage language and as an international language’ (Curdt-Christiansen & Hancock, 2014, p. 3), and influences people’s attitude to Chinese language. The change in the composition of Chinese immigrants—from Southeast Asians of Chinese ethnicity, Cantonese and Fujianese to people from other regions of mainland China—may also have a salient influence on the extent to which Chinese language should be learned and maintained by Chinese immigrants. However, this changing environment has not been well reflected and considered in the existing literature.

### **1.2.2.2 Theoretical explanations and approaches**

As a basis for theorising and formulating research, theoretical framework offers a connection between the literature review and the purpose of the research, guiding the research project to explore the uncertainty and the reality of the situation. This section reviews the existing notable theoretical explanations about Chinese immigration and Chinese heritage language use by immigrants, and explores their suitability to be applied in this research.

First, some scholars analysed this issue from a utilitarian perspective, regarding heritage language learning as capital or an investment. Recently, a few studies introduced Bourdieu’s capital theory (Bourdieu & Thompson, 1991) and Norton’s investment theory (Norton, 2000) into the studies of the Chinese diaspora and their language use. These are utilitarian explanatory paradigms on why overseas Chinese youngsters are engaged to learn and keep both their Chinese and English languages. In Mu’s study, Chinese heritage language ‘helps its learners gain access to a wider range of resources in the forms of economic, cultural, social and symbolic capital’ (Mu, 2014, p. 37); the effort they made to learn and maintain Chinese language could also be seen as a worthwhile investment, which brought both economic and

cultural benefits to them (Wong & Xiao, 2010). However, these studies examined Chinese immigrants' language and culture acquisition and maintenance from a utilitarian perspective, which neglected the fact that Chinese language and culture are not only Chinese immigrants' instruments, but a method through which they could better situate themselves in a multicultural environment and use them to retain their historical cultural roots as well. Therefore, this theoretical perspective is not appropriate enough to help guide this research.

Second, another popular conceptual approach to explain the Chinese diaspora as well as language use is cosmopolitanism, which has proved itself a seemingly reasonable explanation of immigration issues. Cosmopolitanism is used in some research as an ideal, if not a utopian, concept in order to explain how immigrants are situated in the ever-globalised society (H. Chan, 2005; Cohen, 2006; Ziemer, 2013; Wang, 2016a). Chan believed that 'a new type of Chinese identity is emerging—that of the Chinese cosmopolitan' (K. B. Chan, 2005, p. 116). Some research found that although there were generational differences when it comes to Chinese media use and television viewing preferences, the Chinese family had a cosmopolitan orientation as a whole (Cunningham & Sinclair, 2001). However, when it comes to the concept of cosmopolitanism, some scholars still equate 'Eurocentrism with methodological nationalism thereby ignoring the fact that in many places forms of methodological nationalism may be a real, if not unproblematic, way of challenging Eurocentric knowledge production' (Gall, 2015, p. 313). For a long period of time, studies talked mostly about Europe or, at a stretch, the Anglo-Saxon, without acknowledging the equal roles different cultures are playing in constructing individuals' perception. Another problem is that though some researchers jumped out of the scope of Eurocentric, they overly emphasised the harmony and integration of different races, ethnicities and cultures while overlooking the cultural differences and diversity. Therefore, cosmopolitanism theory is not

suitable for analysing the heritage language use of Chinese immigrant children and adolescents.

Third, much like the analyses of other immigrant languages, some scholars have also mentioned multiculturalism and multilingualism when they considered the complex circumstances to which Chinese immigrants were exposed. However, neither of these two theoretical explanations can be used to theorise and analyse this research project. Admittedly, the ideology of multiculturalism provides a reasonable explanation for the diverse demography of immigrants, a wide range of cultural norms, and the accompanying changes of both dominant culture and minority culture. It also leaves minority cultures more living space and provides ‘minority cultures with some platforms thereby they may express their identities through music, festivals, exhibitions, conferences, etc.’ (Kaya, 2013, p. 67).

However, it also has been criticised by other research, in which multiculturalism was used to compartmentalise cultures, to broaden the difference between various cultures and to overlook the equality between so-called mainstream culture and minority culture (Barry, 2002; Radtke, 2003; Rosaldo, 1993). Therefore, it is unsuitable to use multiculturalism theory to analyse Chinese immigrants who live in dual equal cultural circumstances and who are attempting to maintain both their Chinese and English languages. In addition, multilingualism was also introduced in studies of Chinese heritage language in various cultural contexts (Li & Zhu, 2010; Maher, 2015; Stenberg, 2015; Wang, Chern, Riget, & Shoniah, 2015). However, these studies mostly focused on linguistic issues and analysed this topic from a pedagogical perspective, which is only one-side of this research project. This research also aims to include the use and maintenance of Chinese as a heritage language outside of the classroom.

Therefore, the existing explanation of multilingualism is not enough to theorise this research.

Lastly, the notion of Sinophone was introduced by existing studies to analyse the Chinese diaspora and their Chinese language use. The concept of Sinophone was put forward by Shumei Shih (2004, 2007). ‘The Chinese diaspora, understood as the dispersion of “ethnic Chinese” persons around the globe, stands as a universalizing category founded on a unified ethnicity, culture, language as well as place of origin or homeland’ (Shih, 2007, p. 23). The discussion surrounding Sinophone is thus much more focused on the Sinophone community, including but not limited to the consumption of Sinophone cultural products (Curdt-Christiansen & Hancock, 2014; S. Lu, 2007; Lupke, 2016; Pecic, 2016; Shih, 2007; Sun, Gao, Yue, & Sinclair, 2011; Sun & Sinclair, 2015; Yue, 2012; Yue & Khoo, 2014), and the construction and transformation of Sinophone communities (Lai, 2004; Tan, 2013; Wong, 2013), as well as issues of cultural identity (McDonald, 2013; Shih, 2007). However, the conceptual explanation of Sinophone serves as a description of the Chinese diaspora more than a theoretical analysis. The current discussion mostly focuses on delineating the phenomenon of the emergence of Sinophone cultural products and its influence on the people consuming them, rather than analysing the Chinese diaspora from a dynamic and comprehensive perspective. Also, Sinophone studies pay too much attention to the single-track cultural circumstance faced by overseas Chinese while overlooking the dual-track cultural and linguistic practices they make in both Chinese and English, which is not appropriate to theorise this research project.

### **1.2.2.3 Thematic focuses of existing literature on Chinese heritage language use**

Not surprisingly, there is a vast bulk of literature on Chinese heritage language use from different perspectives. Generally, these studies could be categorised thematically and logically to motivation, learning process, cultural use, language perception and ethnic identity.

### *1.2.2.3.1 Motivation of Chinese heritage language learning and using*

The first thread of the literature focuses on what motivated young immigrants to learn and use Chinese language. Since motivation affects the extent to which language learners persevere in learning, what kinds of learning behaviour they exert, and their actual language attainment (Ellis, 2008), research on heritage language has associated motivation with heritage language learning and practices, which provides implications for both pedagogy and cultural studies.

Charlotte Setijadi believes that ‘motivations for learning Mandarin vary from the sentimental to the pragmatic’, with one defining feature ‘a sense of renewed pride in their Chinese ethnicity’ (Setijadi, 2015, p. 154). Chinese language is seen as a means by Chinese Canadians to achieve a goal that is personally important to them; they also described learning Chinese language as being ‘enjoyable and stimulating’ (Comănaru & Noels, 2009, p. 151) and ‘an integral part of who they are’ (Comănaru & Noels, 2009, p. 151). Findings of Wen’s research indicate that factors that motivated Chinese Americans to learn Chinese are ‘intrinsic motivation, that is, to be interested in one’s own cultural heritage and to better understand and appreciate Chinese art and literature’ and ‘passivity toward requirements’ (Wen, 1997, p. 235).

Gardner and Lambert’s motivation theory (Gardner & Lambert, 1959, 1972), which classifies motivations into two categories: instrumental motivation and integrative motivation, is widely used in a large number of existing studies to analyse the motivation of heritage language learning and maintaining (X. Lu, 2007; Lu & Li, 2008; Mu, 2015a; Wen, 2011; Yang, 2003). Instrumental motivation, integrative motivation, or both, are documented as main reasons for Chinese immigrants to learn and retain Chinese language in the existing research.

Much like the instrumental motivation, Norton's investment theory (Norton, 1995, 2000) and Bourdieu's theory of capital (Bourdieu & Thompson, 1991) are applied to explain why overseas Chinese learn and use Chinese language from a utilitarian perspective. Norton argues that people would acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources if they invested in the target language (Norton, 2000). This is confirmed by Weger-Guntharp, who investigated that Chinese heritage language learners' expectations were to attain future work and advanced levels of Chinese, and Wong and Xiao, who conducted a study in which learners considered learning Chinese language to be a wise and worthwhile investment (Weger-Guntharp, 2006; Wong & Xiao, 2010). Similarly, Mu supposes that Bourdieu's concept of linguistic capital offers a meaningful theoretical tool to examine the motivation of Chinese language learning: they may expect a return on their investment and 'an access to a wider range of different forms of capital' (Mu, 2015a, p. 37).

Admittedly, the existing literature has discussed the motivation of Chinese heritage language learners and maintainers. However, these studies either don't distinguish heritage language use and second language use or overly focus on whether heritage language speakers are motivated instrumentally or integratedly separately, overlooking that the basic function of language use is to communicate. For overseas Chinese, the use and maintenance of Chinese language is a way through which they could communicate with their family members and friends as well as be better related with their past. In addition, the rise of China and Australia's historic shift towards Asia may influence Chinese immigrant families' decision-making process regarding language choice, but this updated external environment has not been considered in the current knowledge. Therefore, the existing explanations for the motivation to learn and use Chinese as a heritage language are still not enough.

### *1.2.2.3.2 Learning process of Chinese heritage language*

In addition to researching the motivation to learn and use Chinese heritage language, Chinese heritage language education has also been one of the focuses in the existing research. The position of Chinese language schools and Chinese language education programs is well documented in the previous studies. In the Asia-Pacific region, the history and the evolution of Chinese language education in Malaysia are well explored by scholars (Ee, 1997; X. Wang, 2014); Chinese language and culture education is also accessible in Japan (Li, 2015), Indonesia (Suryadinata, 1972; Zong & Liu, 2007), Singapore (Tan, 2006) and Australia (Chen & Zhang, 2014; Lo Bianco & Liu, 2007; Orton, 2010; Smith, 1993). There is also literature about Chinese heritage language education in the European context, such as in Scotland (Hancock, 2014) and in Netherlands (Li & Juffermans, 2014, 2015). In the United States, more than 70% of Chinese learners attended classes in Chinese heritage language schools (McGinnis, 2005b); Chinese language as a supplementary education in both mainstream schools and community schools is important for both the American education system and Chinese communities (Chao, 1997; Chen, Wang, & Cai, 2010; Kondo-Brown & Brown, 2008; Peyton, Ranard, & McGinnis, 2001).

As documented in existing research, educational programs for Chinese language learning are widely conducted in many immigration countries. However, its learning process should not be limited to the school-based discussions. Existing literature did not provide some descriptions about learning Chinese language in other forms, such as parents' tutoring during after-school time, learning with private tutors, or co-studying with peers, which are also significant approaches through which school-aged ethnic Chinese could learn and acquire Chinese language as a heritage language. This thesis discusses school-aged Chinese Australians' process of learning Chinese language in Chapter 4.

### 1.2.2.3.3 *Cultural use of Chinese heritage language in multiple social settings*

The third thread of the literature concerns the use of Chinese language by school-aged Chinese immigrants outside of the classroom. One important setting is home. The crucial role that family involvement and support play in Chinese language maintenance and development by school-aged Chinese immigrants and the relationship between family involvement and young Chinese immigrants' Chinese language proficiency have been documented in numerous studies (Curd-Christiansen & Hancock, 2014; Lao, 2004; M. Li, 2005; Mu & Dooley, 2015; Xiao, 2008; Zhang & Koda, 2011). Some studies also explored the Chinese language practices in the home milieu in the United Kingdom (Ran, 2000), Canada (G. Li, 2001, 2006), and the US (Wan, 2000; Xiao, 2008; Xu, 1999; Zhang & Koda, 2011).

Compared with the research on practising Chinese heritage language at home, existing research seems to be less concerned with systemically analysing how young Chinese immigrants use Chinese language outside of school and home, such as consuming Sinophone films, TV programs and novels, chatting with friends in Chinese language both online and face-to-face, and participating in some Chinese activities. The mere handful of studies on entertainment and recreational activities that use Chinese language and culture only provide a few observations of behaviours. For example, Xiao believes that advanced Chinese heritage language learners spent more time on book reading, TV watching and character writing than their lower-level counterparts (Xiao, 2008). The current accessibility of Sinophone news, media and cultural products to the Chinese diaspora around the globe has been documented in existing studies (Curtin, 2007; Sinclair, Yue, Hawkins, Kee, & Fox, 2000; Shih, 2007, 2010; Sun, Yue, Sinclair, & Gao, 2011; Yue & Khoo, 2014). This provides opportunities for this research project to analyse how young Chinese Australians practise Chinese language in settings apart from school and home, as well as how their consumption of Chinese cultural products helps them be culturalised in the Chinese track.

#### *1.2.2.3.4 Language ideologies of Chinese heritage language*

The fourth thread of existing knowledge focuses on school-aged Chinese immigrants' perception of languages. Proposed by Silverstein in 1979, 'language ideology' was defined as a set of 'beliefs about language articulated by the users as a rationalisation or justification of perceived language structure and use' (Silverstein, 1979, p. 193). Since then, it has been applied and explored by linguists from various perspectives (Bacon, 2018; King, 2000; Song, 2010) and was regarded as a representation and reflection of personal values, cultural attachments and social functions of a certain language. Considering that people's perceptions of language are always context-bound, dynamic and heterogeneous, Bacon (2018) suggested that language ideology should not be understood with fixed characteristics.

For immigrants who are living in a dual-track cultural and social environment, issues of their language choice and language use are even more complicated than in a mono-cultural country. The over-dominant presence of one language may cause tensions between this language and the other ones. Policy at the national level (Arya, McClung, Katznelson, & Scott, 2016; Curdt-Christiansen, 2014), and family members' perception of language at micro level (Berardi-Wiltshire, 2018) may influence immigrant children's construction of their perception of language, which may impact on their self-perception. However, few studies systematically examine this issue and analyse the association between Chinese immigrant children's language perceptions and their language practices.

#### *1.2.2.3.5 Cultural identity: living as a hybridity?*

Cultural identity, as understood by much existing research, refers to a subjective sense of belonging to a certain ethnic group and may be formed and develop with various factors. 'Since the late 1980s, the mutually constitutive effect between heritage language learning and ethnic identity construction has been gaining significant research ground' (Mu, 2015b, p. 240). The role heritage language plays in cultural identity construction and development has

been documented in the current literature (Cho, 2000; Cho et al., 1997; He, 2006; Hornberger & S. Wang, 2008; Hurtado & Gurin, 1987; Joseph, 2003; Tse, 1998).

Regarding the cultural identity of Chinese immigrants, some scholars have explored the correlation between heritage language and ethnic identity with a meta-analysis method (Mu, 2015b); some studies linked Chinese heritage language and Chinese cultural identity with descriptive words (Francis, Archer, & Mau, 2014; Feuerverger, 1991; Li & Duff, 2014). For example, 'Chinese pupils responded that they needed to learn the Chinese language because they are Chinese' or 'one would just feel ashamed if one did not know about your own language' (Francis et al., 2014, p. 210). In Wong and Xiao's research about identity issues of Chinese immigrants from dialect backgrounds, they provided experiences of dialect speakers, giving 'a glimpse into their multiple identities' (Wong & Xiao, 2010, p. 171). He analyses this issue from a 'language socialisation' perspective, arguing that 'the question of identity may be a key to CHL<sup>5</sup> development' (He, 2008b, p. 115).

However, there are still some problems within this issue. First, much of the research overly emphasises Chinese language proficiency and its influence on Chinese identity, overlooking the complexity of the cultural circumstance where Chinese immigrants are situated. Overseas Chinese are immersed in multicultural countries, which requires them to negotiate between identities. They have to reflect on their cultural belongings; are they Chinese, Americans, Canadians or hybrids? Sometimes they may feel confused about who they are and even struggle with the loss of their cultural roots. Second, due to a lack of awareness of admitting the existence of multidimensionality of ethnicity, the existing literature simplified this issue, overemphasising the ethnicity in the dimension of self-classification while overlooking the ethnicities in the other dimensions, such as observed identity and reflected identity. The other

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<sup>5</sup> CHL here refers to Chinese heritage language.

consideration is that some studies considered identity issue as dynamic (Burke, 1991; Cummins & Early, 2010; Norton, 2010; Norton & Toohey, 2011), but they did not provide an opinion about whether the process of identity formation will continue or stop over time. Does the identity issue have to keep changing, even after a certain age when people's perception has already been established and their language proficiency will not improve more?

### **1.2.3 Chinese language use in Australia**

Though the history of Chinese immigration to Australia could date back to the earliest days of the British colony, Chinese immigration was sporadic and limited to arrivals on trading ships that had passed through Asia in the early 17th century (Tsung, 2015). In the history of Chinese immigration to Australia, there are three milestones that should draw our attention. The first one is the promulgation of the 'White Australia policy' in 1901. 'The Asians were fully rejected from Australia under this policy, including persons from southwest Asia as well as other regions of Asia' (Iredale, Hawksley, & Castles, 2003, p. 321) and Chinese were no exception. In the early years of the policy, which is also the consolidation phase of Chinese settlement in Australia, 'the Chinese who stayed in Australia not only survived but continued to establish and operate profitable businesses' as well (Gao, 2015, p. 5). Second, before the official end of the White Australia policy, the Colombo Plan was introduced in 1950, part of which was an overseas student scheme and benefited the Chinese communities in Australia significantly (Gao, 2015). This benefit does not only refer to the increase of Chinese-Australian population, but also means that the number of well-educated, English-speaking and middle-class Chinese young immigrants rose. Third, the late 1980s and early 1990s saw the significant increase of immigrants from mainland China, which changed the characteristics of the Chinese immigration population considerably. Following the 1989 Tiananmen incident, approximately 45,000 Chinese students in Australia at the time were allowed permanent residence (Tsung, 2015) because of 'their activism and Australia's more

relaxed government policies' (Gao, 2013, p. 10) in 1 November 1993. The Chinese community in Australia thus is a combination of many sub-cultural communities, including but not limited to immigrants from Southeast Asia, Hong Kong, Taiwan and mainland China (Chen & Zhang, 2014).

The current relatively large Chinese community in Australia, as well as Chinese immigrants' activism, evokes scholarly interest in the study of Chinese immigration, which includes immigrants' economic activities (Gao, 2015; Tran, 1993), construction and transformation of Chinese communities (McKeown, 2001; Sun, 2009), media consumption (Sun & Sinclair, 2015; Sun, 2002), and Chinese knowledge diaspora (Yang & Qiu, 2010) among other subjects. Also, a few have paid attention to the language policy (Siew, 1995; AEF, 2012) and heritage language education (Mu, 2014, 2015a). However, the research about use and maintenance of Chinese heritage language by school-aged Chinese Australians is still sporadic and unsystematic.

The condition of Chinese heritage language education has been documented in the current literature. 'The first Chinese community school was established by community leaders in 1909, so Chinese language teaching has existed in Australia for more than 100 years' (Chen & Zhang, 2014, p. 186). However, in the early period Chinese language teaching and learning was limited to Chinese communities (Smith, 1993). Because of the complexity of the Chinese languages and the variety of immigrants' origins, difficulties of teaching and learning Chinese in community schools are recorded in some studies (Chen & Zhang, 2014; Smith, 1993). Recently, with more immigrants from mainland China, new ideas and new resources are brought to Chinese community schools in Australia, with Xinjinshan Chinese Language and Culture School as a typical example (Chen & Zhang, 2014). As one of the largest Chinese community schools on the globe, the condition of Xinjinshan school has been analysed in

existing literature from different perspectives (Chen & Zhang, 2014; Gao, 2015; Gao, Ingram, & Kee, 2016). Besides schooling in Chinese community schools, the Chinese program in mainstream schools has been explored in some research (Chen & Zhang, 2014; Orton, 2010).

Factors that may motivate young Chinese Australians to learn and maintain Chinese heritage language are another key point of scholarly interest. Siew (1995) explores the cultural factors that may enhance the chances of language maintenance in the Chinese community, such as interaction with the family and community, marriage patterns, age and gender. Mu analyses this issue from a utilitarian perspective, arguing that Chinese-Australian children and adolescents regard learning Chinese language as a cultural and lingual capital and expect both both academic and economic benefits (Mu, 2014, 2015a).

Apart from these, the role that family involvement plays in developing youngsters' Chinese language literacy is well documented by some scholars (Mu & Dooley, 2015; Pauwels, 2005; Tannenbaum & Howie, 2002). Through sampling analysis of ethnic Chinese children in Sydney, Tannenbaum and Howie provided evidence that 'family relations play a significant role in language maintenance in immigrant children' (Tannenbaum & Howie, 2002, p. 420). The quantitative sub-study conducted by Mu and Dooley showed positive correlation between family support and young Chinese Australians' heritage language proficiency: 'the more the perception of family support, the more Mandarin-favourable the language use policy at home, and/or the more years of family support for formal CHL learning, the higher the participants' CHL proficiency tended to be' (Mu & Dooley, 2015, p. 512).

There are also a few sporadic analyses of the relationship between Chinese heritage language and cultural identity. Chinese language is recognised as a core value of culture and ethnic Chinese groups by Chinese respondents in previous studies (Siew, 1995; Smolicz, Lee,

Murugaian, & Secombe, 1990). Through an online questionnaire, Mu captured 230 complete responses, concluding that there was a strong positive relationship between Chinese-Australian urban young adults' Chineseness and their Chinese heritage language proficiency (Mu, 2012).

As stated above, the research of Chinese language use by school-aged ethnic Chinese Australians is sporadic, limited and unsystematic. The mere handful of existing literature on this topic expresses more interest in exploring it from a pedagogical perspective, focusing more on describing the Chinese language teaching programs in Australia and analysing how to improve the syllabus (Chen & Zhang, 2014). Some studies explore the relationship between family involvement and Chinese language use. However, the existing literature did not provide a systematic analysis about how young ethnic Chinese Australians use Chinese language outside of the classroom. Moreover, though Mu's research explores why young Chinese Australians are motivated to learn and maintain Chinese as a heritage language from a utilitarian perspective, other motivations—such as keeping intimate relationships with elderly generations or facilitating communication with Chinese friends—have not been explored yet. Also, though the influence of Chinese language on young Chinese Australians' identity has been included in the current literature, the complexity and multidimensionality of ethnic identity has not been considered and examined.

#### **1.2.4 Statement of problems**

The problem with the existing literature on Chinese heritage language use could be summarised as follows. First, the current explanations of school-aged Chinese immigrants' motivation to learn and maintain Chinese heritage language are not enough. The existing studies indicated that young Chinese immigrants learn and use their Chinese language skills because they expect to benefit from them, both academically and economically. This finding,

though illuminating, ignored that Chinese language, as a heritage language for Chinese immigrants, was mostly used to facilitate communication throughout their lives. It is a language that they mostly use at home to communicate with their older-generation family members and thus to keep an intimate relationship with families. In their community, they also use their language skills to socialise and chat with their Chinese friends and establish connections with Chinese society. It is also a way to be better related with their past and retain their cultural roots, especially nowadays, when China is becoming a greater power than it was before. The updated environment that has made it important for Chinese immigrants in Australia to make decisions regarding language choice has not been reflected in the existing literature.

Second, existing literature suggested little about the learning and acquisition of Chinese as a heritage language outside of the classroom. Most studies provided observations about the current condition of Chinese heritage language education in both day school and in community school and provided an analysis of ethnic language policy, as well as some pedagogical suggestions about how to improve Chinese language teaching in school. Some also indicated the important role that parental mediating plays in helping young Chinese immigrants to learn and keep their Chinese language. However, few studies explored how school-aged Chinese immigrants learned Chinese language during after-school time. How they develop their bilingual skills and how they make language preference has not been examined in the current knowledge.

Third, the cultural use of Chinese language by school-aged Chinese immigrants is even more under-studied. Though some research documents the Chinese language practices in the home milieu, apart from communicating with family members few studies examined how young Chinese immigrants used Chinese language to interact with friends, and how they consumed

the cultural products and did recreational activities with their Chinese language. However, these casual methods also play an important role in maintaining and developing Chinese language proficiency, as well as in making the young people more familiar with Chinese culture. Therefore, the exploration of their Chinese language practices outside the classroom is necessary and meaningful.

Fourth, few studies analysed how children perceive Chinese language and their bilingual skills. By learning and using Chinese language, school-aged Chinese immigrants form their own perceptions and thoughts about what Chinese language is and how important it is. This is of importance in constructing their ethnic identity and impacting their attitude towards maintaining and developing Chinese language. It is also necessary to examine what behaviours they have due to the different language ideologies they have formed. However, there is almost no research probing into this question, especially with the consideration of the updated cultural and social environment.

Fifth, the current research on Chinese heritage language's impacts on ethnic identity development of school-age Chinese immigrants is not systematic. To begin with, most research focused on the correlation of Chinese heritage language proficiency and Chinese identity and considered this issue in a single-track cultural setting. However, the complex cultural circumstance overseas Chinese people faced was neglected. The interactional influence of Chinese language and English language on Chinese immigrants' identity construction and transformation needs to be further explored. Another problem is the lack of awareness of the multidimensionality of ethnic identity. Because of this, issues of ethnic identity should not be considered in a single dimension, but the existing literature paid much attention to the dimension of self-classification, while ignoring the other dimensions.

Overall, though the existing literature provided insight in understanding Chinese immigrants' language use, it did not take the ever-changing social and cultural environment into consideration. The recent increasing Chinese economic and political position may influence Chinese immigrants' perception of learning and maintaining Chinese language. This may also impact their decision-making process in regard to their children's language development. The composition of Chinese immigration has been changed by an increasing number of immigrants from mainland China since the late 1980s, which also has had a significant impact on the use of Chinese language by Chinese immigrants. However, this social change has not been reflected in the existing literature.

In the Australian context, the problems stated above about motivation, learning process, cultural use, language ideologies and ethnic identity all exist. Moreover, this topic in the Australian context is currently more under-researched, unsystematic and sporadic. The small number of existing research projects included Chinese heritage language education, motivation, family involvement and cultural identity. However, it is still far from providing a complete, systematic and implicational analysis of the use of Chinese language by school-aged ethnic Chinese Australians. Especially considering contemporary Sino-Australian relations and the altered composition of Chinese immigration to Australia, it is worth investigating this issue.

### **1.3 Research questions**

This research aims to address the gaps mentioned above by answering the research core question: why and how school-aged Chinese Australians learn, use and maintain Chinese language in the new context and how this process constructs their perception of Chinese language and ethnic identity. Sub-questions this study aims to answer are as follows:

1. How do constantly changing Sino-Australian socio-economic and socio-political circumstances affect school-aged Chinese Australians' use and maintenance of Chinese language?
2. What are the influential factors that motivate children and adolescents to learn and use the Chinese language? Are their motivations function-orientated, culture-orientated or collectivism-orientated? Will their motives change over time?
3. Do the children experience the change of language preference as other immigrant children in their language learning process do? If yes, are there any effective ways to help them develop their bilingual skills simultaneously?
4. What is the children and adolescents' mechanism for language using and switching? Do they consume any cultural products in the Chinese language? Why and how do they use Chinese language in multiple social settings?
5. How does environment affect their perception of language at macro and micro levels? How do they negotiate their language imagination with realities? What behaviours do they have under the influence of language ideologies?
6. How does Chinese language influence their ethnic identity from different dimensions? How important is Chinese language in the formation of their ethnic identity? What are other influential factors?

## Chapter 2 Research Design

This chapter outlines the research design, introducing the analytical framework that guides this research. This framework is derived and developed from the literature review on school-aged Chinese immigrants' Chinese language use and reflection on recent Sino-Australian relations' impact on Chinese immigrants' behaviours and decision-making process. This chapter also details the research methods, including data collection, data analysis and data management.

### 2.1 Dual-track culturalisation: a theoretical framework

To guide this research project, a theoretical framework is needed to theorise language use by school-aged Chinese Australians and to analyse how their language use and maintenance have affected the early stage of their identity development. Considering the shortcomings of existing approaches and concepts, this study aims to put forward a new theoretical framework, which is to be called, in this study, 'dual-track culturalisation' for understanding Chinese language use and maintenance in school-aged Chinese Australians.

The core idea of this theoretical framework is to consider and examine the special cultural circumstances faced by school-aged ethnic Chinese in Australia and the parallel efforts they made in multicultural Australia. Immersed in the bicultural settings, children and adolescents learn and use two languages, Chinese and English. Through their dual-track language practices they construct their perceptions of languages and their hybridity identity, which contributes to their dual-track culturalisation. Though the dual-vision insight has already been widely adopted in some cultural studies (Jules-Rosette, 1986; Benet-Martínez, Leu, Lee, & Morris, 2002; Vandebroek, 2007) to deal with the complexity of circumstances, the

existing analysis did not provide a systematic explanation that involves the roles of immigrants' language use.

By applying the 'dual-track culturalisation' theoretical framework, this study offers a more comprehensive theoretical explanation of the special features and the dynamic process of school-aged Chinese Australians' language practices and the roles their language use plays in the process of their ethnic identity formation. This section includes two parts: re-examining the limitation of several existing similar concepts and assessing the characteristics of the 'dual-track culturalisation' framework.

### **2.1.1 Reviewing the existing concepts**

As reviewed above, though immigrants' cultural practices have been well documented in previous studies, no existing theoretical framework is suitable to explain why and how young Chinese Australians learn, use and maintain their Chinese language while making every effort to learn and use English. Previous studies on immigrant children's use of language either overly focused on the extent to which the host culture affects the mother culture, which neglected the parallel cultural contexts in which immigrants are living; or they were too outdated to reflect the continuously changing cultural and social environment. They ignored that Chinese language is neither their mother language nor their second language, but their heritage language. This theoretical framework has been put forward and applied because of the unsuitability of a number of existing perspectives on this topic.

The theoretical ideas of enculturation and acculturation overemphasise the significance of either side of culture while ignoring that, under some circumstances, immigrants are living in dual (or multi) cultural worlds where they acquire, practise and keep dual (or multi) cultural behaviours simultaneously.

The theoretical concept of enculturation refers to the process through which individuals acquire established dominant culture, including but not limited to the generally accepted behaviours, languages, norms, values and beliefs of the adopted culture. It has been well documented in the existing research that this process follows a natural course of cultural norms that are acquired by individuals (Arabski & Wojtaszek, 2011; Corbett, 2003; Lange & Paige, 2003; Medina, 2005; Saville-Troike, 2008). During this process of socialisation, individuals with lower sociability, intentionally or unintentionally, are culturalised or shaped to become a qualified member of the society. The significant role that language plays during the process of enculturation has also been pointed out, where ‘language learning for children is an integral part of their enculturation’ (Saville-Troike, 2008, p.222).

However, the concept of enculturation better suits the analyses of the influence of culture on individuals’ perception rather than the explanation of interactive effects of different cultural circumstances. The probable cultural conflicts and negotiation have not been revealed in the concept of enculturation, which is not suitable to be applied in this research.

Compared with enculturation, which happens in the native context, acculturation occurs only in a non-native or secondary context, which delineates the transformation of cultural features to foreign cultures and thus overemphasises the overwhelming effects brought by the host culture. The first widely used definition of acculturation was provided by Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits, and they argued ‘acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups’ (Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936, pp. 149-152).

This has clarified that continuous changes of cultural patterns happen with acculturation. However, this concept underlines the significance of the host culture and its influence on

individuals, while it has not paid much attention to the heritage culture and minority culture. Therefore, it is unsuitable to analyse the young Chinese Australians' dual-track cultural environment. Though the children and adolescents live in the Australian society, they also live in the Chinese community. It is hard to identify which culture has more influence on these children's culturalisation process. This research hypothesises that they are influenced by dual cultures parallelly, and this will be confirmed by the analyses in the following chapters.

The essential role that language use plays in the process of acculturation has also been explored in the existing research (Arabski & Wojtaszek, 2011; Gonzalez, 2004; Nakata, 2006; Oxford, 1996; Rose, 2008; Stern, 1983), while the negotiation between target language and mother language is the emphasis of much research. Though this research focuses on the Chinese language use on the Chinese track of the dual-track culturalisation, it also considers the influence from mainstream society and mainstream language. Therefore, this concept is also insufficient and unsuitable to explain the language-using status of school-aged Australians with Chinese ethnicity.

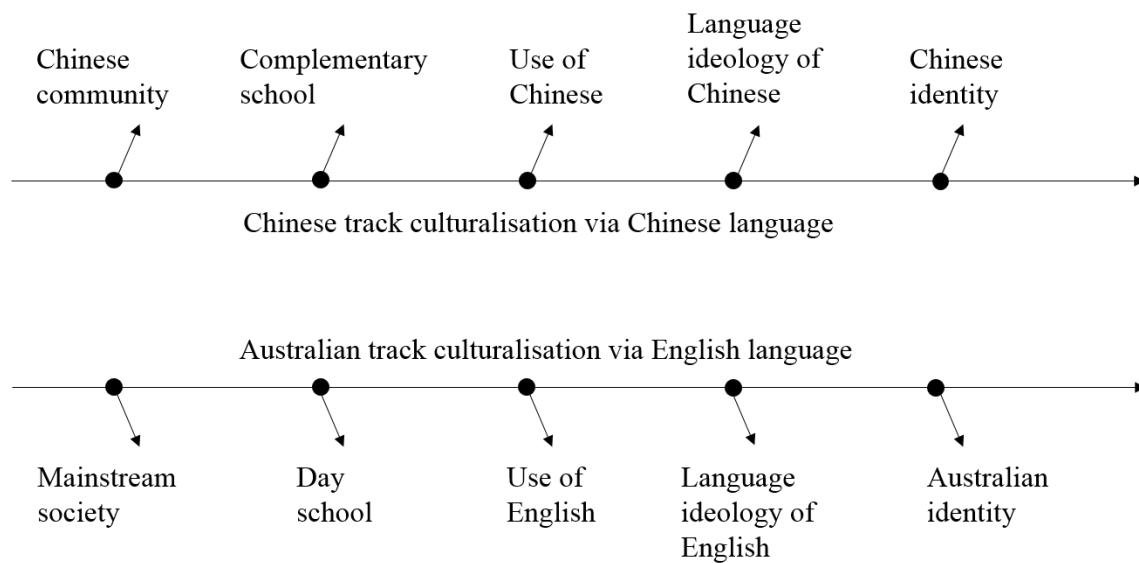
Apart from the two above-mentioned concepts describing the process of being culturalised by certain cultures, inculturation that originally refers to the approach Christianity and Church teachings take in presenting to non-Christian cultures (Collins, 2017), as well as the effect of those cultures on these doctrines. It was also widely used to analyse the process of culturalisation.

Though religious overtones are not prominent in the following research, a list of studies have made it clear that inculturation mainly represented the adaptation of one certain culture to cultural differences (Anthias, 1992; Antonio, 2006; Atiemo, 2013; Collins, 2007; Laamann, 2013; Pinto, 1985; Yu, 2000). Their focus was not how immigrants situated themselves well

in dual-track or multi-track cultural circumstance. Therefore, it is not suitable to explain the dual cultural practices that Chinese Australians are involved in.

### 2.1.2 Structure of the ‘dual-track culturalisation’ framework

As Chapter 1 introduced, there are five key aspects through which these Chinese-Australian children and adolescents experience the culturalisation process via language practices, and this thesis also analyses this issue from the five perspectives which are structured logically. They are motivation, learning process, cultural use, language ideologies, and cultural identity. The ‘dual-track culturalisation’ framework structures the five perspectives logically and systematically, as is shown in Figure 2.1.



**Figure 2.1 The parallel dual-track structure**

*Source: Developed by the author based on the fieldwork conducted in multiple schools.*

According to Figure 2.1, the beginning points on both the tracks represent the parallel cultural and social environments that the children and adolescents live in, which refers specifically to Chinese community and mainstream society. The dual-track cultural environment is of importance in shaping immigrant children’s and their parents’ motivation for learning and

developing languages. Following this point, four points in each track represent a logical chain in which the children and adolescents learn and use language, and form their understanding of language and identities.

Taking the Chinese track of parallel tracks as an example, this section explains how these children experience culturalisation rooted towards China and Chineseness via their language practices. Within the Chinese community in Australia, their life trajectory is relatively complete, physically and mentally. Children and adolescents can study, communicate and consume in a relatively comfortable condition. They learn, maintain and develop their Chinese language skills in Chinese community school and many of the adolescents may take Chinese language as one of the subjects when they attend Victorian Certificate of Education (hereafter VCE) courses. Within and outside the Chinese community, they use Chinese language in multiple social settings, such as communicating, consuming cultural products, and socialising. Through learning and using Chinese, the children and adolescents construct their understanding of the Chinese language and bilingualism, which refers to the language ideology regarding the Chinese language. The final point on the Chinese track is their cultural identity, the formation of which is significantly influenced by language use and the culturalisation process.

What happens in the English track is similar to what happens in the Chinese track, so this section does not duplicate analysis. The dual-track culturalisation framework links objective cultural and language environment with children's subjectivity in language practices and cognition development. Though this thesis mainly focuses on what happens in the Chinese track, it acknowledges and emphasises the existence of both tracks of culturalisation and the interactions and negotiations between them.

### **2.1.3 What is ‘dual-track culturalisation’ framework**

Following the analyses of unsuitability of existing frameworks and the structure of the dual-track culturalisation framework, this section discusses four characteristics of this framework in order to justify its suitability and reasonability in guiding this research. The four features are ‘culturalisation through learning’, ‘dual-track efforts’, ‘process and conflicts’ and ‘the complexity of cultural identity’.

#### **2.1.3.1 Culturalisation through learning**

It is through learning that immigrant children and adolescents complete the dual-culturalisation process. Culturalisation is a by-product of the process of learning, by which immigrants acquire languages, customs and beliefs of both heritage culture and host culture. Being culturalised is a lifelong learning process (Usher & Edwards, 2007), which is conducted and processed both intentionally and unintentionally. For school-aged ethnic Chinese in Australia, schooling—including attending both day school and community school—is a formal approach through which they are being educated about culture and language; socialising during and outside school time is seen as an informal method for them to be culturalised and practise language and culture subconsciously.

To put it in detail, Australian children and adolescents of Chinese origin attend day school to learn Anglophone culture and language, as well as attending Chinese community school to know more about Chinese culture and language, so as to acquire a bilingual capacity.

Meanwhile, Chinese-Australian children and adolescents are also being culturalised subconsciously via attending cultural activities and socialising. The process happens, for example, with the consumption of cultural products, such as books, newspapers and TV programs. English-language media and cultural products are omnipresent in the Australian context; meanwhile, Chinese-language information and cultural products are not inaccessible

as documented in the existing literature (Cunningham & Sinclair, 2001; Sun, Gao, Yue, & Sinclair, 2011).

Apart from the consumption of various dual cultural products, school-aged Chinese Australians socialise with both their Australian friends and Chinese friends, which is also a way to practise and develop their bilingual and bicultural competency and to strengthen their bonds with dual cultures unconsciously. Therefore, their dual-track culturalisation is completed through continuously learning and acquiring.

### **2.1.3.2 Dual-track efforts**

The dual-track culturalisation framework is structured by the dual-vision insight of immigrants' cultural practices. Rather than being dominated or marginalised by the host culture, school-aged Chinese immigrants in Australia, as well as their parents, actually create two parallel cultural worlds where they can practise both Chinese and English and keep connections with both cultures. As discussed in Section 1.2.2.2, theoretical explanations of 'cosmopolitanism' and 'Sinophone' overemphasise either the harmony of different cultures or the single cultural aspect, such as Sinophone culture and language environment, which is not suitable to be applied in this research. Compared with Gao's (2006) critical argument that Chinese Australians were de-marginalised by both Australians and Chinese, which is relatively negative, this framework considers this issue from a more positive perspective.

In fact, both Anglophone culture and language and Chinese culture and language are equal in power to school-aged Chinese Australians, without being overwhelmed by either side of culture and language. They neither give up their mother culture so as to assimilate to the local life nor stick to the heritage culture blindly, which makes them alienated. Instead, they make efforts to learn, understand and adapt to both their heritage language environment and the vernacular language environment simultaneously.

In Australia, the fact is that there is a great proportion of school-aged Chinese Australians attending day school for the purpose of learning about English culture, while they also attend Chinese community school to maintain their heritage culture. Along with young Chinese immigrants themselves, their family members are also involved in developing children's and adolescents' bicultural and bilingual competency, sending them to day school on weekdays and to community school on weekends, tutoring them during after-school time and making both English-language and Chinese-language entertainment—such as films, TV programs and novels—accessible at home. Both students and parents make efforts to create dual cultural and lingual circumstances, successfully making young ethnic Chinese Australians live in parallel worlds.

### **2.1.3.3 Process and tensions**

This dual-track process is characterised by tensions and dynamics. Though in most instances, the children and adolescents are living successfully in parallel cultural environments, it does not mean that one side of the culture has no influence on and interaction with the other. Rather, these children and adolescents are influenced by the interplay of Australian and Chinese cultures and languages. Cultural communication, negotiation and even collisions may occur and are reflected in various facets.

The time and effort school-aged Chinese Australians invest in Chinese language and English language skills are not the same all the time and may vary with their moods, the literacy of two languages, peer and family pressures and the other factors. The time and effort made on one side diverts time and concentration from the other, which leads to the decreasing level of culturalisation and literacy of the other. In return, the unbalanced level of Chinese and English also leads to the unequal involvement in dual languages and cultures.

The conflictual characteristic is also embodied in the imbalance of the family members' involvement in the two languages, and the disparity of media and entertainment information of the two languages received by the children and adolescents. For example, if a family makes too much effort on Chinese language and culture while youngsters themselves reject to do so, tensions may happen. Moreover, the imbalance of investment in Chinese language and English language may result in conflicts within their self-perception, as some scholars stated that 'though some biculturals perceive their cultural identities as compatible and complementary, others tend to describe them as oppositional and contradictory' (Benet-Martínez et al., 2002, p. 493). The conflict and complexity of their cultural identity is explained in detail in Chapter 7. Therefore, too much effort on Chinese heritage language leads to difficulties in integrating with the local culture, while too much concentration on the host language and culture accelerates the loss of cultural roots and belongings.

In addition, this dual-track process is dynamic rather than static. It is volatile with the continuously changing socio-economic and socio-political environment, Sino-Australian relations, as well as some personal factors. Since this doctoral research is required to be finished within four years, it is difficult to track the changing conditions and continuously updating external environment. However, this does not prevent me from taking its dynamism into consideration when I conduct this research.

#### **2.1.3.4 Complexity of cultural identity**

The complexity and the special characteristics of Chinese-Australian youngsters' cultural identity is another point to make clear in this framework. A famous fourfold conceptual framework (Berry, 1997, 2005) that posits four strategies— 'integration', 'assimilation', 'separation/segregation' and 'marginalisation'—was widely applied to examine and classify immigrants' cultural belonging. However, it is unsuitable to simply categorise the school-

aged Chinese Australians to any of the four statuses. They own dual cultural orientations and will switch fluidly by reacting to external changes in different cultural settings. Though these two cultural identities exist harmoniously in most circumstances, their self-perception may also vary because of many internal and external factors.

One significant factor is the language they speak. Shih argued that the issues of Chinese cultures are not only related with people from China, but also with people of various ethnicities as well, and identity is defined 'not by ethnicity, though ethnicity and language sometimes correspond, but by languages' (Shih, 2013, p.7). Considering the complexity of Chinese immigrants, the extent to which they grasp Chinese language, as well as English, is of significance in their constructing and transforming of cultural identity. Basic contextual factors play an important role in immigrants' identity construction, such as gender (Anthias, 1992; Dasgupta, 1998; Lowe, 1996; Norton, 2000), age (Uba, 2003; Yip, Gee, & Takeuchi, 2008), generation status (Benet-Martínez et al., 2002) and family composition.

The complexity of their identity also because it differs with the rapidly changing exogenous environment, which means that they always respond to the constant changes. For example, Chinese immigration's demographic composition has been changing considerably in the past few decades due to the Australian government's settlement of 45,000 Chinese students in the late 1980s, which may also have had some effect on immigrants' perception of both heritage language and host language. The current situation is different from decades ago, when a higher proportion of ethnic Chinese were from Southeast Asia. Therefore, school-aged Chinese Australians' cultural identity is complex and keeps changing.

Overall, this dual-track culturalisation framework could well explain the parallel worlds where young Chinese Australians are situated and their dual efforts to use and maintain both Chinese and English languages. Though this research focuses more on the questions of why

and how school-aged Chinese Australians maintain their Chinese cultural heritage language and keep their Chinese cultural roots, this does not mean that the involvement in Anglophone culture and language has been overlooked. Rather, this research is based on the acknowledgement of the existence of the two languages and cultures, as well as the interactional influence between them. This framework also provides support and explanation for the motivation of language maintenance, learning process and cultural practices as well as the issues of language perceptions and cultural identity, which could correspond with the research emphases of this project. Therefore, this framework is evolutionary, holistic, and dialectical, as well as suitable to theorise and structure this research.

## **2.2 Methodology**

This research mainly adopts qualitative methods to analyse data, with the complement of quantitative methods. The thesis questions the language use of school-aged Chinese Australians and how they achieve dual-track culturalisation via their language practices. Language use is reflected in a variety of forms, including in multiple settings, levels of language skills, attitudes to language, etc. Culturalisation process is also embodied in many aspects and is affected by many factors. This is a complex set of relationships, and exploring such a complicated set of relationships requires the examination and consideration of many factors that are less easily to be quantified. Moreover, the aim of this study is not to quantify the issues of language use, but to shed light on how immigrant children and adolescents experience culturalisation through their language use. Therefore, drawing on qualitative methods to collect and analyse data is appropriate. In addition, this study also adopts quantitative methods to analyse numerical data that was obtained from online documents. This could provide us with an insight into the demographic background of Chinese immigrants in Australia, which is directly related to the main research questions of this thesis.

### **2.2.1 Data collection methods**

This study employed several data collection methods, including participant observation, interview, and secondary research. The purpose of collecting data from as many sources as possible was to provide a relatively unbiased account of school-aged Chinese-Australian children and adolescents' language use and their culturalisation process. Since a single source of data was insufficient to provide comprehensive analysis, and data from different methods could be able to complementary to each other, collecting data from a diverse mix of sources was needed and thus was conducted.

Specifically, I conducted fieldwork in multiple schools in Australia from February 2017 to December 2019. During fieldwork I interviewed teachers, Chinese-Australian children and adolescents, caregivers, tutors and school managers. I also conducted observations in various schools and classrooms. In addition to first-hand data collection, I also collected secondary data via documentary and textual analysis. The methods of data collection are elaborated in this section.

#### **2.2.1.1 Participant observation**

Observation is an effective way through which we could get information and materials more authentic than those from other ways, since participants' behaviours are observed and recorded under an unconscious circumstance. Considering the specificity of children and adolescents, participant observation adopted in this project was mainly group observation rather than individual. Group observations were conducted mainly on campus and in classroom.

Within the classroom, the children and adolescents were observed in the aspect of their language learning and using behaviours. This includes what they learned in the Chinese class, their attitudes towards Chinese language learning, the language they use in communications

with teachers and peers, their after-class activities, etc. On the campus, both children and their parents were observed regarding their positivity in using both Chinese and English during class breaks and their behaviour in using Chinese language.

In total, participant observations were conducted in 17 classrooms, ranging from pre-schooling class to Year 12 during class time and breaks and in five campuses of three schools. A full list of observations is provided in Tables 2.1 and 2.2.

**Table 2.1 Campus-based participant observations**

No.	Campus name	School
1	Main campus	Xin Jinshan Chinese Language and Culture School
2	Elite campus	Xin Jinshan Chinese Language and Culture School
3	Library <sup>6</sup>	Xin Jinshan Chinese Language and Culture School
4	N/A	Richmond West Primary School
5	N/A	Carlton Gardens Primary School

**Table 2.2 Classroom-based participant observations**

No.	Classroom	Campus and School
1	Year 1-A classroom	Main campus, Xin Jinshan Chinese Language and Culture School
2	Year 2-C classroom	Main campus, Xin Jinshan Chinese Language and Culture School
3	Year 4-B classroom	Main campus, Xin Jinshan Chinese Language and Culture School
4	Year 6-A classroom	Main campus, Xin Jinshan Chinese Language and Culture School
5	Year 6-B classroom	Main campus, Xin Jinshan Chinese Language and Culture School
6	Year 6-C classroom	Main campus, Xin Jinshan Chinese Language and Culture School

<sup>6</sup> Library of Xin Jinshan Chinese Language and Culture School is located separately with other campuses. A lot of after-class activities associated with Chinese language learning, such as reading class, tutoring, and practice exams are conducted in this campus.

7	Year 8-B classroom	Main campus, Xin Jinshan Chinese Language and Culture School
8	Year 9-A classroom	Main campus, Xin Jinshan Chinese Language and Culture School
9	Year 10-A classroom	Main campus, Xin Jinshan Chinese Language and Culture School
10	Year 10-B classroom	Main campus, Xin Jinshan Chinese Language and Culture School
11	Year 11 classroom	Main campus, Xin Jinshan Chinese Language and Culture School
12	Pre-schooling-A classroom	Elite campus, Xin Jinshan Chinese Language and Culture School
13	Pre-schooling-B classroom	Elite campus, Xin Jinshan Chinese Language and Culture School
14	Year 5 classroom	Elite campus, Xin Jinshan Chinese Language and Culture School
15	Year 6 classroom	Elite campus, Xin Jinshan Chinese Language and Culture School
16	After-school classroom	Richmond West Primary School
17	After-school classroom	Carlton Gardens Primary School

### 2.2.1.2 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews adopted in this research were conducted in a relatively casual way in order to, on the one hand, reduce interviewees' vigilance and build up trust with them, which contributes to the reliability of data and materials, and on the other, leave some space for expected issues or topics, which may lead them to talk more and provide us with more relevant information. However, though the interviews were conducted in a casual form, the topics and interview questions were fixed in general, primarily around the several topics as listed in Table 2.3.

**Table 2.3 Semi-structured interview questions**

No.	Questions
1	Why do the children and adolescents learn and use the Chinese language?
2	How do they learn and use the Chinese language?
3	What do they learn in the Chinese class?

4	Are their Chinese skills in different aspects balanced?
5	In what social settings do they use the Chinese language?
6	Do they consume any Chinese cultural products?
7	What kind of activities associated with Chinese language and culture are they interested in?
8	How do they perceive the Chinese language and their bilingual skills?
9	Do they find being able to speak Chinese useful or interesting?
10	How do they perceive themselves in regard to identities?

Through snowball sampling I interviewed 121 participants, including school-aged Chinese Australians (n=53; 38 female; 15 male), caregivers (n=30; 21 female; 9 male), teachers (n=31; 24 female, 7 male), and tutors (n=7; 3 female; 4 male). When selecting children, age and ethnicity are two key variables. School-aged refers to an age group from children attending pre-school class to graduating from secondary school. Generally, this ranges from five to 16 years of age, which is an important stage of bilingual skills development and self-perception construction. Their experience of heritage language use and ethnic identity towards their home country is more typical than that of adult immigrants. In addition, including a wide age range of participants provides insight if any change takes place in this process. In regard to ethnicity, this research chose both Australian-born children of Chinese ethnicity and Chinese children who immigrated to Australia in their early childhood, who are called 1.75 generation migrants (Rumbaut, 2004), and in their middle childhood who are 1.5 generation migrants, but excludes 1.25 generation migrant children, who immigrated to Australia in their adolescent years. This is due to more similarities shared by 1.75 generation and 1.5 generation immigrant children with their second-generation counterparts than 1.25 generation immigrant children.

The parent interviewees in this research include both male and female parents who had children ranging from age four to age 16. This research also includes several grandparents who take the main mission to raise children. The teacher interviewees were selected from different grades from pre-school class to Year 12 class, with the consideration of levels of Chinese language skills of the students in their class. Interviews were also conducted with six university tutors who had frequent interaction with students who had just graduated from high school and had Chinese ethnicity.

When selecting interview candidates, this study considered age, gender, level of language skills and family composition to gather diverse and typical data. Interviewees were asked to provide information about these children' and adolescents' language use. All interviews were face-to-face. All interviews with adults were conducted in Mandarin Chinese, because most of them had received their education mainly in China. Children were interviewed in Chinese or English according to their preference.

### **2.2.1.3 Documentary and textual analysis**

Documentary and textual analysis is also of vital significance in this research. This is because though what we are researching sometimes is a focused topic, we still 'inevitably want to draw broader conclusions and to apply our data to other related situations' (Oliver, 2012, p. 5). Thus, it is literature review that 'helps us to appreciate something of the sequence and growth of knowledge' (Oliver, 2012, p. 6) and enables us to situate our research in the related area.

Furthermore, reviewing documents enables us to make use of the existing data and information, which could save our precious research time. Data collected from documents for this project includes government reports and organisation reports of language policy, data

from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, relevant media reports about the condition of Chinese language use and maintenance in Australia.

### **2.2.2 Fieldwork in Australia**

After the Keating Labor government's 'November 1 [1993] decisions', which settled 45,000 or so Chinese students, the proportion of Chinese immigrants from mainland China has been increasing significantly. The 2016 Australian Census reveals that over 1.2 million people in the country claim Chinese ancestry (ABS, 2018). Among them, people who regard Mandarin and Cantonese as the most preferred language to speak at home are 46% and 22% respectively, which jointly contributes to the prevalence of Chinese language use in the Chinese community in Australia.

The increase in new immigrants from a mainland China background changes the composition of Chinese immigration in Australia. The immigrants' offspring who attend primary or secondary school are the ones experiencing the change in Chinese language use in Australia. Considering the present environment in the Chinese community in Australia, and the fact that these children and adolescents are in the stage when their literacy and self-perception are being formed, this research takes school-aged Chinese Australians as research subjects, so as to provide a relatively comprehensive and systematic analysis on this issue.

This study conducted the fieldwork at multiple schools in Victoria, Australia. Xin Jinshan Chinese Language and Culture School (hereafter Xin Jinshan School) is the main data-collection site, with the complement of two primary schools, Carlton Gardens Primary School (hereafter PS) and Richmond West Primary School. Established in 1992, Xin Jinshan School has become one of the largest and most professional Chinese community schools, with nearly 5000 students studying Chinese language and culture there. This provides enough research subjects and research space. Carlton Gardens PS has a number of children of Asian

background. Richmond West PS is a prestigious English-Chinese bilingual school. These schools could provide representative and diverse research subjects.

### **2.2.3 Data analysis and management**

This section first presents how data is analysed in this research. It then elaborates how data is managed, clarifying issues such as property rights, ethical approval, and data storage.

Two methods were used to analyse the data collected in this project. For numerical data, statistical methodology was adopted. Two steps were conducted and sequenced to process the data: the first to calculate the descriptive statistics and the second to explain the statistics.

In regard to the recording and oral materials that are difficult to quantify—participants' descriptions, feelings and opinions, for example—this research analysed them with a descriptive method, categorising and archiving them into several specific themes or topics, such as internal and external motivations of learning Chinese language, how to develop Chinese literacy, to what extent is Chinese language used in communication and cultural consumption, and will the subjects' cultural identity keep changing with the development of their Chinese language skills.

Data analysis is not and should not be the ultimate step to present the research outcome.

Rather, how to apply the data and materials we have already collected and analysed is much more important. To achieve this goal, this research further explored whether the archived and analysed data and materials could be applied in the theoretical framework, and whether they could support the hypotheses and arguments. In other words, whether the materials and data could answer the research questions put forward at the beginning and the potential questions. Only if the answer was positive was the research completed.

Previous literature from library resources and public databases, online documents, and data collected from fieldwork, including but not limited to interviews and participant observations, were three major sources of research materials. The data and literature retrieved from public databases are clearly indicated with their sources. All the information collected during the researcher's fieldwork that involves privacy issues is kept strictly confidential.

Regarding ethical issues, before conducting interviews and participant observations, this research applied to the 'Behavioural & Social Sciences Human Ethics Sub-Committees' of the Central Human Research Ethics Committee (CHREC) at The University of Melbourne for the purpose of ethics clearance. Cultural beliefs of participants and interviewees were carefully considered and checked in advance and respected during the fieldwork. Since children and adolescents are the main research subjects of this project, great attention has been paid to juveniles' sensitive information and psychological health. All the participants, along with the information they provided, were kept anonymous.

All the data statistics from fieldwork, as well as recording of group observations, was transferred to digital files to facilitate the analysis and to store for a lasting period. These digital files were categorised and kept in separate digital folders, in accordance with the type of data collection, interviewees, and research topics. Within each of them, documents were put in separate digital folders in accordance with sub-classifications. Each digital document was named and ordered carefully. The digital data was backed-up to external hard drives on a daily basis, for safety; meanwhile, all the data and materials were password protected to ensure the privacy of sensitive information. Non-digital, hard-paper documents and materials were also classified and labelled carefully and then stored in separate folders in accordance with their attributes.

### **2.3 Summary**

The main purpose of this chapter is to present the research design of this project. To address the research questions raised in Chapter 1, this chapter provides an analytical and theoretical framework, which is to be called ‘dual-track culturalisation’ framework, to guide the research and to connect the following empirical chapters. The second section of this chapter provides the methodology employed by the research, which elaborates how fieldwork sites were chosen, and how data was collected, analysed and managed.

## **Chapter 3      Motivations Analysis: From Blind Followers to Diligent Cultivators**

What motivates Sofia to learn and maintain Chinese in an English-speaking environment? Why does Ella sacrifice weekend time to accompany her son to learn the Chinese language? Why could William have two mother languages—English and Chinese—and shift between them so fluently? Will the ‘pushing’ factors behind the Chinese language learning behaviours of Chinese-Australian children and adolescents change over time? Many of such questions were raised in my mind in the first few weeks of my fieldwork. Before answering these questions, there is something that has to be clarified. That is, how the subjects have been motivated to learn and to use Chinese, and how these motivational factors influence their choices of the language use.

### **3.1 Introduction**

Motivation is considered by existing studies as one of the main determining factors in encouraging people to learn a language (Comănanu & Neols, 2009; Dornyei, Henry, & MacIntyre, 2014; Ellis, 1994; Gardner & Lambert, 1959, 1972; Heinzmann, 2013; Lasagabaster, Doiz, & Sierra, 2014; Murray, 2011; Oxford & Shearin, 1994; Ushioda, 2013). What the motivations are and to what extent the learners are motivated will affect language learners’ time commitment and involvement, as well as the extent of their activity in language learning and using.

For second-generation and 1.75 generation Chinese children and adolescents, the issue of their motivation in learning and using Chinese is more complicated. First, compared with those who live in a society that is dominated by a single language, Chinese-Australian children and adolescents are affected more obviously by their parents in language learning.

This is because, in the Chinese community in Australia, learning Chinese is more likely to be a choice of a family rather than an individual determination. Parents play an essential role in children's success in learning and maintaining the Chinese language, which is discussed in detail in Section 3.2.

Second, though young Australians with Chinese ethnicity live in an environment where English is the mainstream language, they also live in a Chinese-speaking community, especially when they are at an early age and have not stepped into the society. Therefore, their Chinese language learning activities sometimes are a kind of collective behaviours that is influenced by community members rather than resulting from some certain motivations. That is to say, many of them are sent to the Chinese language school to learn Chinese because their parents trust the group members and are dependent on the group. This is discussed in Section 3.3.

Third, Chinese Australians' motivation to learn and use Chinese language is a dynamic process. With their growing up and the language environment they are immersed into changing, the driving forces behind their Chinese language learning and using are changing accordingly.

However, these special characteristics have not been fully analysed in the existing literature. Some of the current research failed to distinguish heritage language learning and second language learning, ignoring the peculiarities of the heritage language use by migrants (X. Lu, 2007; Lu & Li, 2008; Mu, 2015; Wen, 2011; Yang, 2003). Some of the existing literature overly focused on whether heritage language speakers were motivated instrumentally, overlooking the fact that the basic function of language is to communicate (Mu, 2015; Weger-Guntharp, 2006; Wong & Xiao, 2010). It is also under-researched that some children are sent to learn Chinese because of the tendency to conform to community practices.

Considering the special environment that the children and adolescents are immersed into, this study explores how the dual-track cultural environment influences immigrant children and their families to make the decision to learn and use Chinese. In other words, this chapter explores why they come to the Chinese community school to learn Chinese, and why they use the Chinese language in multiple settings systematically and dynamically.

Specifically, this chapter is organised as follows: (1) Decision-making process in learning the Chinese language. In this section, why Chinese-Australian children sit in the Chinese classroom and learn Chinese is analysed. The role of parents, peers and children themselves in helping children make the decision to learn the Chinese language is explored systematically. (2) Motivational orientations of school-aged Chinese Australians to learn and use Chinese. This section puts forward a hierarchical structure to analyse the motivations behind the Chinese language learning behaviours, to provide a systematic and complete analysis of this issue. (3) The complexity and the dynamics of the motivational factors. This section analyses the coexistence of multiple functional factors and the temporal characteristic of the motivations of Chinese-Australian children to learn and use Chinese.

### **3.2 Decision-making process in learning the Chinese language**

No matter why they attend the Chinese community school to learn the Chinese language, it is a fact that a great number of Chinese-Australian children and adolescents currently learn Chinese at school or home. Before this chapter analyses the motivational orientations of their learning behaviours in Section 3.3, it is necessary to clarify how they are sent to learn the Chinese language.

Due to children's young age, the decision to learn Chinese is a result of joint forces rather than self-determination. For Chinese-Australian children, it is always the case that to learn the Chinese language or not is affected by the environment they are immersed in, including

their families and primary social groups that they interact regularly with. This finally turns out to be a decision made by the whole family and influenced by external factors rather than the children's self-determination. During this process children, parents, peers, and environmental factors contribute jointly to the result that a great number of Australian children with Chinese ethnicity are sent to the Chinese community school to receive Chinese language education.

According to the analysis of data collected from the fieldwork, this section first examines what role parents, the children and their peers respectively play in the decision-making process. Then, a model of negotiation among children, parents, peers and other external environmental factors is introduced. In this model, the general trend of how these forces interact with each other and how the influences exerted by these forces change over time is presented.

### **3.2.1 Chinese parents: more than involvement and encouragement**

According to data analysis, in the whole period of school-aged Chinese Australians' language learning and acquisition, their parents play a significant role in developing and maintaining the children's Chinese language ability. As Interviewee 8 (48; M; 13 May 2017)<sup>7</sup>, who migrated to Australia 20 years ago, said: 'to learn the Chinese language or not is decided by children's parents; children's academic performance is good or not is also decided by parents' effort'.

This section analyses what influence parents have on Chinese-Australian children's language choice, and what role they play respectively in the different stages of children's Chinese language learning. Parents play four main roles in this process: decision-making when

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<sup>7</sup> '48' is the age at interview; 'M' is 'male'; '13 May 2017' is the date of interview. This schema will be applied to all the interviewees in this research.

children are in lower grades, facilitating when children are in intermediate grades, tutoring when children are in higher grades, and being the main creators of the Chinese language environment during the whole process.

### **3.2.1.1 Parents as decision-makers**

In the first class in a new semester, Interviewee 42 (29; F; 10 June 2017), a teacher of Year 2, made a quick survey in her class. She asked her students, ‘Do you like learning the Chinese language?’ With the answer ‘No’ from all the children, Interviewee 42 posed the second question, ‘Then why do you come here to learn Chinese language?’ Almost all the children looked back to the parents who sat at the back of the classroom, and spoke loudly without any hesitation, ‘They send me here’. ‘I was really surprised when I saw this scene, and I even thought how difficult this subject would be for me to teach’, Interviewee 42 said.

Actually, it is a common attitude in classes in Chinese community schools. Abundant data and cases from fieldwork verify that for Chinese-Australian children, it is always the case that to learn the Chinese language is a decision made by their parents rather than themselves. Because of the willingness to maintain their children’s Chinese language ability and the lack of Chinese language environment, Chinese parents always make all their effort to encourage, persuade, even force their children to learn Chinese during their beginning stage at school. They believe that the language environment in a family is not sufficient for their children to develop and maintain the Chinese language, and only through systematic schooling could their children better enhance their Chinese language ability.

Therefore, the Chinese community school has been witnessing an increasing number of children of Chinese origin being sent to the school. With the fieldwork-based data, this section discusses parents’ strong willingness and positive behaviours to make their children learn Chinese, and their considerate company during children’s learning process.

*3.2.1.1.1 Willingness*

Parents are resolute in sending their children to learn the Chinese language. Interviewee 11 (35; M; 18 March 2017), who migrated to Australia from Beijing, said that his young daughter who was in Year 1 was reluctant to learn Chinese. However, he thought it was necessary, with the hope that his daughter could at least know some Chinese characters and could conduct basic communication with Chinese people. Interviewee 19 (37; M; 6 May 2017), a Singaporean father whose son is in Year 4, said with a smile that, ‘he did not want to learn the Chinese language, and I forced him to learn it’.

This strong enthusiasm not only exists among the parents of school-aged children, but also among the parents of pre-school children. Interviewee 12 (34; F; 25 March 2017), a parent whose has three children—a son aged six and two daughters aged eight and two—expressed extraordinary enthusiasm in developing children’s Chinese language ability. She said she would continue encouraging her son and elder daughter to learn Chinese, and she would send her young daughter to the Prep Chinese class when she was three years old.

*3.2.1.1.2 Behaviours*

As well as sending their children to community school, parents encourage them to learn and use Chinese during after-school hours. Parents, children and teachers all believe that it is parents who send their children to learn the Chinese language. The learning behaviours start with parents’ efforts and willingness.

Every Saturday and Sunday morning, hundreds of cars are driven through the community school campus to drop young children. Hundreds of young children, hand in hand with their parents, go into the classroom to learn Chinese, or to have fun in a Chinese-speaking environment. Interviewee 40 (6; F; 10 June 2017) and Interviewee 41 (6; F; 10 June 2017), twins from a Chinese-Indonesian family, are in Year 2 in the community school. When asked

‘Why did you come here to learn Chinese?’, both of them replied, ‘My parents sent me here’. This is not uncommon among the children in the lower grades. A Year-4 teacher said, ‘It’s hard to push these children to speak Chinese in the class because they did not want to learn and use the Chinese language, and they’re here just because their parents sent them here’ (Interviewee 18, 38; F; 22 April 2017).

Parents’ resolution to make children learn Chinese language is not only reflected in sending them to Chinese community school, but also in providing them with a supporting environment to learn and use the Chinese language after school. A parent described how she motivated her six-year-old son to use Chinese at home:

My son always watched English programs and read English books at home. But, I let him to retell the story in the Chinese language. Sometimes he wanted to tell in English, while I disagreed. I encouraged him to check dictionary if there was any new Chinese character, and I told him not to be afraid of making mistakes. Just spoke and practised! (Interviewee 12, 34; F; 25 March 2017)

Another parent, who just migrated to Australia one year ago, and who has a son in Year 4, really was apprehensive that his son’s Chinese language ability would deteriorate with gradually increasing interaction with English-speaking peers. He said:

I was really worried that his Chinese language ability would decline. My son’s Chinese writing was not so good. I let him to write weekly diary. However, what he wrote was always like a running account. I hoped he could use more descriptive expressions to record more about his feelings. (Interviewee 21, 35; M; 6 May 2017)

### *3.2.1.1.3 Companionship*

Apart from strong willingness and daily engagements to let their children learn and practise the Chinese language, Chinese parents also accompany their children considerately and patiently. During children's three-hour learning in the community school, Chinese parents stand outside the classroom in twos and threes, chatting or just playing on their phones. Some may watch through the window to see if their children are studying hard. During class breaks, more parents get out of their cars, joining with the standing parents, to give water and snacks to their children. When asked if she felt tired from getting up early on the weekend and standing outside for about three hours, Interviewee 6 (32; F; 11 March 2017) said, 'Though it's a little tired, I felt in fulfilment in this process, and I believed it was worthwhile to do so'.

In the beginning stage parents undoubtedly play a vital role in letting their children be immersed in a Chinese-speaking environment, and thus helping them improve their language ability. Parents always make the decision to send children to learn the Chinese language rather than children deciding to do so themselves.

Without Chinese parents' resolute willingness and great efforts, a majority of Chinese-Australian children would not have kept their Chinese language, whatever their level of ability. Without parents' effort, children also would not have been living in the dual-track cultural environment and being culturalised by two cultures.

### **3.2.1.2 Parents as facilitators**

Moving to the intermediate grades, things turn out to be different. Rather than making decisions for their kids, what parents mostly do in this period is encourage and persuade, which facilitate children's Chinese language learning. Parents actually act as facilitators and persuaders to motivate and support children to continue their Chinese language learning and using. As stated above, since children gradually step into an English-speaking environment

and their socialisation with people speaking English in this stage happens more frequently than before, some of them become unmotivated to learn Chinese and tend to give it up.

Accordingly, parents in this period could be divided into two opposed categories.

The first group of parents become much less ambitious than they are in the first stage, which has been discussed in Section 3.2.2.1. As a Year 6 teacher, Interviewee 27 (40; F; 27 May 2017) believed that for parents, the main purpose for sending children to learn the Chinese language was to let them be immersed in a Chinese-speaking environment, and only after this would they consider how much Chinese their children could learn.

When some children in this period show signs of wanting to quit learning Chinese, parents become unambitious accordingly. However, parents still make an effort to keep their children's Chinese language ability. From Interviewee 27 we know that in her class there are some students who are sent from higher grades by their parents. Parents just want to keep children immersed in a Chinese-language-speaking environment and to learn some Chinese, in spite of how much they could learn. Some parents also asked Interviewee 27 to decrease the difficulty of the exam in case the children would feel frustrated. Interviewee 39 (45; F; 10 June 2017), whose child is in Year 9, even said, 'I didn't expect that he could learn and behave well in the Chinese class; I felt so satisfied as long as he could come to the Chinese class'.

This phenomenon is especially prominent among Chinese parents with Chinese ethnicity but not from mainland China. For some parents from Southeast Asian countries, such as Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore, Chinese is a language they are familiar with but not proficient in. They could not provide enough help and support to improve their children's Chinese language ability at home, but they still want their children to learn and to keep this language. Therefore, they send their children to the Chinese school, and they don't expect

them to achieve proficiency in Chinese. A teacher who is teaching Year 9 and whose students are mostly from Southeast Asian background indicated:

The main purpose of sending children to the Chinese class for this group of parents was to maintain the Chinese language environment for children, and they did not want to push their children to learn and speak the Chinese language. (Interviewee 65, 30; F; 12 August 2017)

Compared with the first group of parents, the second group perform more positively in helping their children go through the difficulties of Chinese language learning and develop their children's Chinese language skills. The enthusiasm of most of the parents in this group is aroused by the excellent academic performance of their children.

As stated above, children in this stage are going to face the big question: which subject to choose in the Victorian Certificate of Education (hereafter VCE). Once they decide to take Chinese as one of their subjects they will make all efforts to improve their Chinese language ability and to suffer from the severe competition. In this period, parents' encouragement and support is indispensable. Both parents and children become more involved in the pre-preparation for the future VCE study. Interviewee 85 (45; F; 2 September 2017), a mother from Shanghai, said that she always encouraged her little son in Year 6 to learn and use Chinese, both in the school and at home, and she also believed that he should either study hard or not study at all, never anything in between.

### **3.2.1.3 Parents as tutors**

Parenting refers to the process of rearing a child from infancy to adulthood, and it has the most significant effect on young children. The current literature has documented the importance of parents' influence on the physical, emotional and intellectual development of

their young children (Weinberger, 1996; Whalley, 2017; Whitehead, 2007). In addition to the important roles that they play in young children's language development, parents also play an essential role in developing their heritage language skills when they step into a higher grade. However, this important influence has not been fully discussed in the previous studies.

It is common for parents to provide some help in their children's learning process, such as helping them know more words or learn simple counts. However, for most parents without professional knowledge on specific subjects, such as chemistry or advanced maths, it is difficult to provide any academic assistance when what children learn gets more difficult.

In contrast, the case of the Chinese migrant family in Australia is different. No matter whether Chinese parents are well educated or not, as long as they have a high proficiency of Mandarin Chinese they could provide academic assistance for their children's preparation for the VCE Chinese subject. The academic assistance here does not only refer to the Chinese language they speak being regarded as a language environment for children to develop Chinese unintentionally, but also refers to their acting as tutors to help their children practise oral Chinese for the formal exam. The mastery of the Chinese language of many Chinese parents means that they could be academic tutors for their children to learn Chinese and possibly get an ideal mark in the examination. Moreover, parents with high proficiency in speaking Mandarin do not need to spend extra money to recruit a tutor for their children. In this process Chinese parents play an absolutely new role in helping children achieve academic success in Chinese exams.

Interviewee 2 (48; F; 26 February 2017) is one of the managers of the high grades in the Chinese school. At the parents meeting of a new semester, Interviewee 2 emphasised the importance of the oral exam, and mobilised the parents present to help children practise speaking Chinese at home. She said parents' effort was extremely important in enhancing

children's Chinese listening and speaking ability. This is not just empty talk, since most Chinese parents indeed do so.

When asked whether she had helped her son to practise Chinese during his preparation for the Chinese exam, a parent whose elder son just finished Chinese in VCE gave this positive response:

Of course, I helped him to make dialogues in the Chinese language and we always made mock oral exam at home. I told him the correct pronunciation and the appropriate wording if he made mistakes. Finally, he got 47, a very high mark in the Chinese exam. (Interviewee 85, 45; F; 2 September 2017)

Another parent, Interviewee 114 (46; F; 17 November 2018), also said that she and her husband pushed their son to speak Chinese at home when he was in Year 10 and Year 11, and they found it was helpful to improve his Chinese speaking ability.

#### **3.2.1.4 Parents as creators of the Chinese language environment**

In addition to the three main roles that parents play in the three stages of Chinese-Australian children's and adolescents' growing up, there is also a role they play during the whole period of children's Chinese language learning and development. That is as creator of the Chinese language environment for their children.

Through daily communication, Chinese parents in Australia actually have been creating a relatively closed but highly stable Chinese language spoken environment for their children to learn, practise, develop, and at least maintain their Chinese language. For children, Chinese parents are not only one of their major import sources of the Chinese language, but also their main output object of it. On one side, most parents speak Chinese at home with their children or their own parents, which provides the children with the language environment to practise

Chinese listening and speaking. No matter how fluently Chinese parents could speak English, Chinese is always the preferred language that most Chinese family would like to use to communicate with. Even for children whose Chinese literacy is not that good, or those who are reluctant to speak Chinese, their parents at least immerse the children in the Chinese spoken environment to develop their listening ability subconsciously. Children are thus also immersed in the Chinese cultural environment.

On the other side, to communicate with parents is also one of the most important reasons why Chinese-Australian children and adolescents learn and develop the Chinese language.

Without the indispensable need to communicate with family members, children would be much less motivated to learn Chinese, because there would be fewer opportunities for them to use this language. From this point of view, parents become the main export object of children's Chinese language use. The environment that parents create for children to practise and use Chinese language exists throughout the complete period of their language development, and will even have effects on their lifelong process of Chinese language use. Therefore, as the main creators of a Chinese language environment for Chinese-Australian children, parents are of vital significance.

Overall, Chinese parents play an extremely important role in developing their children's Chinese language ability. The roles that parents in different periods play are different, ranging from decision-makers for lower-grade children, facilitators for intermediate-grade children to tutors for higher-grade adolescents, respectively. They also act as the creators of the environment for their children to practise and use the Chinese language. It is the special dual-track environment that the children are immersed in that makes Chinese parents have such an important, multifunctional and dynamic influence. Without parents' effort, Chinese-

Australian children would not develop their bilingual ability and live in the dual-track cultural environment.

### **3.2.2 The increase of self-consciousness and the polarisation of behaviours**

For many school-aged Chinese Australians, whether to learn the Chinese language is decided by their parents, while they decide themselves, to a large extent, whether to maintain and to develop it. In spite of the influences of parents, peers and other external factors, children's self-consciousness in the process of their language use could not be ignored. This factor becomes stronger gradually when they are growing up and stepping into the higher grades, which leads to the polarisation of the Chinese language learning. The polarisation shows the division of young Chinese Australians' absolutely different attitudes towards the Chinese language learning and using.

On the one side of this dichotomy is the group of Chinese children and adolescents who learn and use Chinese language spontaneously, with high enthusiasm and strong motivation. This group are self-motivated to learn Chinese, rather than being coerced. This is caused by three factors. First, since they have passed the most difficult stage, learning the Chinese language, for them, is more like a habit than drudgery. Writing is regarded by many as the most difficult part of Chinese language learning. Chinese characters are a totally different type of writing symbol from English words for children to learn and to remember. Therefore, learning to write Chinese characters is a challenge for the young children to face.

Generally, Chinese children start to learn how to write Chinese characters when they are in Year 1. 'By the Year 4, most children would learn approximately 400 Chinese characters and the vocabulary of about 600 Chinese characters could bring children with the literacy to read and understand about 80% Chinese articles', a teacher in Year 4 said (Interviewee 18, 38; F; 22 April 2017). This verifies that once children pass the intermediate grade and they have a

basic vocabulary and literacy to read Chinese, it becomes easier for them to learn the language. A parent whose son is in Grade 5 suggested:

I believed that learning was a process of habit development, and learning how to write the Chinese characters was the most difficult stage; once the children went through this stage and took writing Chinese characters as a habit, it would not be difficult for them to learn the Chinese language in the future. (Interviewee 23, 31; M; 13 May 2017)

Second, with the rise of children's self-consciousness, some of them become aware of the benefits that speaking Chinese could bring, both practically and culturally. According to data analysis, the first time that children express their willingness to choose Chinese as one of their VCE subjects is in Year 6. Also at this age, children stated that the rise of China was a motivational factor for why they learned the Chinese language. Despite the specific motivations of learning Chinese, the important thing here is that with increasing age, children's self-consciousness of learning is also rising. They have the awareness, autonomy and ability to choose what language they learn and use.

Third, during the process of learning, some of them accept and respect the Chinese culture, which is beneficial for them in learning the Chinese language. To know, to acknowledge, and to accept is a process. With children's growing up, they have more opportunities to know and understand the Chinese culture and also have more time to be immersed into a Chinese cultural environment, such as being reared by Chinese-speaking grandparents or spending holidays in China. During this process, some of them generate interest in the Chinese culture. Therefore, to learn Chinese and to speak this language with their family members becomes easier in this period than in the beginning period. The behaviours of learning the Chinese language are spontaneous for this group of children.

Once their learning behaviours are spontaneous rather than coerced, learning and speaking the Chinese language is not a difficult thing for them. When they step into Year 10, which is the preparatory year for the VCE examination, and when they decide to choose Chinese as one of the subjects in the VCE, most of them will make an effort to learn, practise and use the language to get a high mark in the exam. VCE is an important stimulus for Chinese-Australian children and adolescents who decide to maintain the Chinese language.

Positioned on the other side of this polarisation is a minority of Chinese-Australian children who show signs of forgoing learning the Chinese language. One of the managers of the Xin Jinshan School said that children in Year 5 to 6 spent more time alone at home, and the period when the school lost most students also happened at this time (Interviewee 1, 65; M; 25 February 2017). Because of the increase of self-consciousness and some other factors, the minority of Chinese-Australian children have little interest in learning the Chinese language and show resistance to learning it. When they step into higher grades and have to shoulder more academic pressure from other subjects, they decide to give up learning Chinese.

### **3.2.3 Peers: companionship, modelling, pressure and conformity**

Previous studies explored the importance of peer pressure on language learning. However, most of them focused on the influence of peers on children's foreign language learning (Hay, 2005; Kondo-Brown, 2006; Philp, Adams, & Iwashita, 2013; Sato & Ballinger, 2016; Swain, Brooks, & Tocalli-Beller, 2002). There is not enough discussion about the relationship between peers and children, as well as its influence on children's heritage language learning in the existing literature. Based on the data obtained from the fieldwork, this section aims to analyse the influences that peers exert on the Chinese-Australian children's and adolescents' Chinese language learning and using in the dual-track cultural environment from four

aspects, which could be specialised as peer companionship, peer modelling, peer pressure and peer conformity.

### 3.2.3.1 Peer companionship

‘The meaning of the word friend, if looked at in the context of the children’s accounts, seems to mean having a person to be with, as a companion’ (Mayall, 1994, p.59). Peer companionship is important in motivating children to attend school and to learn. Chinese-Australian children are no exception. They would like to be sent to the Chinese class and to learn the Chinese language partly because of their peer companionship. Learning a difficult language for three hours, especially for young children, sometimes means more chances and time to have fun with their Chinese friends, who they cannot always meet in day school. With companionship they could have happiness and joy, and ward off loneliness.

Interviewee 4 (5; F; 11 March 2017) is an Australian-born girl whose parents are both from Beijing. She attended Year 1 in the Chinese community school in 2017. For the whole morning of two Saturdays, Interviewee 4 refused to step into the Chinese class. She just stood outside the classroom, confronting her father (Interviewee 6, 32; M; 11 March 2017), who kept trying to persuade Interviewee 4 to learn Chinese. I was firstly shocked by the father’s patience and the girl’s insistence. Then I was told by Interviewee 6 that his daughter did not want to learn the Chinese language, not because she disliked learning it, but because her best friend was absent these two weekends. A teacher of Year 5 who is also a parent, with a daughter in the intermediate grade, also believed that staying with friends was a very important reason why children opted to learn Chinese:

When travelling to China with me, my child showed no interests in knowing the Chinese culture. In contrast, she was more enthusiastic in participating in the Chinese cultural activities organised by the school during their trip back to China which was

called *Tracing Our Roots Through Culture*. During the trip, she enjoyed speaking the Chinese language with her peers whose Chinese ability was in the same level with hers and also enjoyed being immersed into the Chinese cultural environment. (Interviewee 96, 35; F; 9 September 2017)

### 3.2.3.2 Peer modelling

The concept peer modelling confirms a learner's desires and attempts to become like another person in some ways, such as interests, preference, cultural belonging, and language use.

Murphey's concept of 'Near Peer Role Models' (Murphey & Arao, 2001) is helpful for us to understand the importance of this concept. The lack of peer modelling is regarded as one of the challenges in children's heritage language maintenance and multilingual development (X. Wang, 2015). For Chinese-Australian children, the decision to attend the Chinese language school and to learn the Chinese language is made partly due to peer modelling. Children always refer to their outstanding friends or siblings, who they know for years and who they would like to model their language learning behaviours on.

Interviewee 36 (7; M; 10 June 2017), an Australian-born Indonesian-Chinese boy, is in Year 2. His elder brother is fluent in both English and Chinese, and he grew up with his brother. His brother's mastery of the two languages motivated Interviewee 36 to become a person like his brother and he can now speak Indonesian, Chinese, English, French and Italian. He said he was influenced and encouraged significantly by his elder brother to learn the Chinese language.

This also happened to Interviewee 43 (10; M; 10 June 2017), who is in Year 6. He has an elder brother who has graduated from secondary school and is currently majoring in medical science at The University of Melbourne. His elder brother scored 52 after scaling in the VCE Chinese subject, which means that he was one of the top 2% of students in that year.

Interviewee 43 also models his elder brother's learning behaviours and has a strong will to become a person with high bilingual ability like his elder brother.

### 3.2.3.3 Peer pressure

Due to the existence of peers, children may feel pushed and pressured to study. Chinese-Australian children who live in the Chinese community and attend the Chinese community school every weekend also experience this psychological status. Rather than living in a single cultural and lingual environment in which being able to speak a single language is enough for people to communicate, Chinese-Australian children live in a dual cultural environment which requires them to be bilingual. That their friends in the community are bilingual—though at different levels—also exerts some pressure on their language learning. This peer pressure has both positive and negative influence on children's Chinese language learning.

Some children become more ambitious under the peer pressure. As a teacher of Year 6 said:

Some children just want to be the No. 1 in whatever they do, including learning the Chinese language, so once they start to learn the Chinese and they are surrounded by their peers who are also learning the Chinese language simultaneously, they will make their best effort to learn it well. (Interviewee 22, 33; F; 13 May 2017)

However, some become less ambitious and unmotivated under peer pressure. Interviewee 22 added:

Because of many reasons, children display uneven language abilities in the Chinese class. This has a visible negative effect on children who are in the lower level of the Chinese language. They prefer to learn and review the Chinese language at home rather to learn together with their classmates, in order to get rid of the high pressure brought

by the skilled language learners. But it always turns out that they quit learning after a period of time. What a pity. (Interviewee 22, 33; F; 13 May 2017)

#### **3.2.3.4 Peer conformity**

Peer conformity refers to the actual behaviours of conforming to the norms of the other members of a certain group. ‘Adolescents may feel tremendous pressure to conform to the linguistic norm of speaking the mainstream language’ (Caldas, 2006, p. 107). Peer conformity is prominent in the Chinese migrants’ behaviours as well as in Chinese-Australian children’s language learning behaviours. Chinese-Australian children live in a dual-cultural environment where most of their peers learn both Chinese and English. This sets a model for the children, so it seems like plausible that bilingual ability is required of them. The children, especially those at an early age, have not even thought why they are sent to learn the Chinese language and just regard it as a normal thing that other children around are doing too.

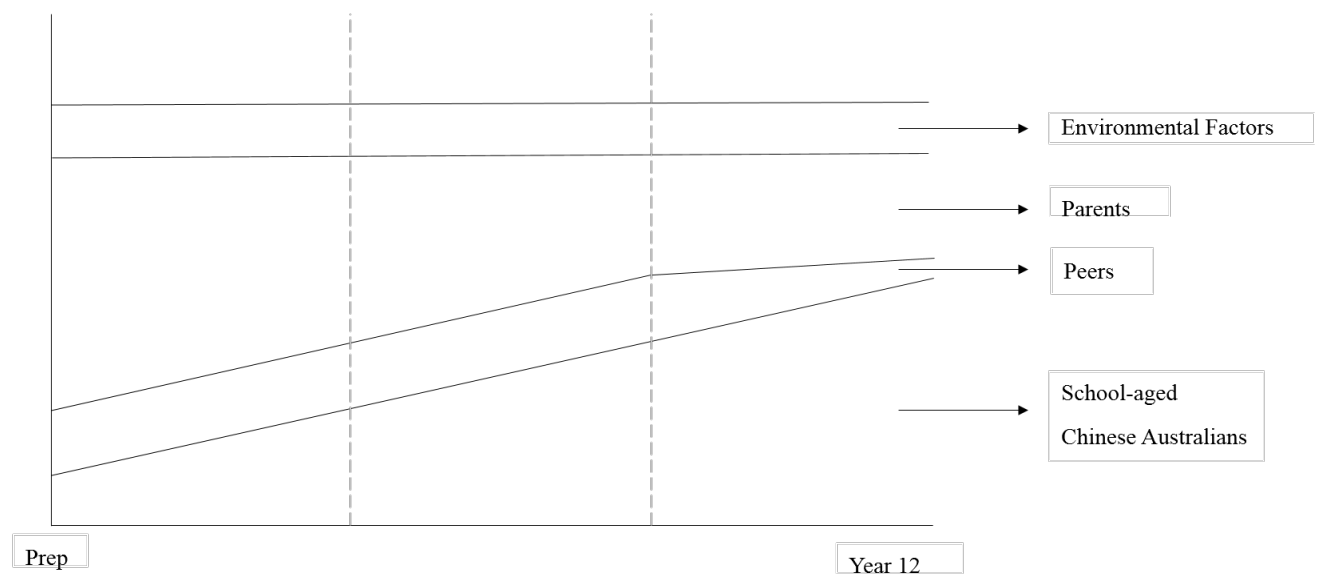
Learning Chinese is like a group activity that most school-aged members of the Chinese community follow—a behavioural norm. A parent whose child is in the Year 1 class said:

The phenomenon that learning the Chinese language is required and necessary is created by my husband and me for our kid. We told him that Chinese was a required course, and you see, each of your friends was learning it during weekends. Now, our kid had totally accepted this and attended the Chinese weekend school to learn the Chinese language happily. (Interviewee 15, 33; F; 25 March 2017)

According to observations, students in the higher level were found to like doing Chinese homework when they stayed with their Chinese peers, who were all doing Chinese practice. Based on interviews with their teachers, the students felt much less motivated to do the Chinese homework when they stayed alone (Interviewee 72, 52; M; 19 August 2017).

### 3.2.4 The dynamic trend of the decision-making process

According to the analysis of data collected from interviews and participant observations, the fact that school-aged Chinese Australians are sent to Chinese class is jointly due to the impact of parents and peers, and the children and adolescents themselves. This section looks at how each side's influence changes with children's growing up. This trend is based on my fieldwork and analysis, and is shown in Figure 3.1.



**Figure 3.1** The dynamic trend of each side's influence

*Source: Developed by the author based on the fieldwork conducted in multiple schools.*

First, the decision-making process is dynamic, and various forces have different influences on children's language learning at different stages. Figure 3.1 demonstrates that, as children grow up, whether to learn Chinese or not is a decision increasingly made by the children themselves, influenced by their parents and peers; meanwhile, the decision-making process is also affected by environmental factors.

Specifically, the timeline of the decision-making process of learning the Chinese language could be divided into three stages. The first stage is when children are at an early age, from Prep to Year 3. In this stage the maturity and cognitive ability of Chinese-Australian children

are at a low level. Their behaviour is conducted mostly out of personal feeling rather than a specific reason or motivation. Therefore, it is difficult for them to make a sensible decision solely by themselves. In this case, their decision to learn Chinese is virtually made by their parents. It is more appropriate to say that the Chinese language learning behaviours of children are owing to parents' effort rather than children's self-determination. During this stage, children's peers also play an essential role. This is because, for young children, early peer relationships have significant effects on their willingness to attend school, with subsequent consequences for academic success (Hay, 2005). Some children attend the Chinese language class during the weekend only because of their desire to meet and have fun with their Chinese peers. A body of evidence from fieldwork could verify this, which has been discussed in detail in Section 3.2.1.

Data analysis of this research suggests that the second stage is the period when children's maturity and cognitive ability are developing, while they are still not mature enough to think and behave independently. This roughly refers to children in Year 3 to Year 7, who are aged roughly between seven and 11 (Piaget & Inhelder, 2008). During this stage, Chinese-Australian children's consciousness about language use, such as to learn a language or not, and which language to learn, is increasing. Children's growing consciousness in decision making means parents' influence is decreasing. During this stage, the conflicts between children and their parents in language learning and using are more significant than in other stages. Some children who are sent to Chinese community school due to their parents' determination rather than their own willingness quit Chinese language learning. This results in a decreased number of children attending Chinese community school. Peer relationships are also of some importance during this stage. Since children in this period are in the rebellious stage, positive peer relationships not only contribute to academic success in Chinese language learning, but also turn out to help children develop a positive personality.

The third stage refers to the time period when Chinese-Australian children's maturity level is high enough for them to make the decision themselves, and they also have to shoulder the responsibility for their own decisions and behaviours. These adolescents attend Chinese community school to learn the Chinese language increasingly because they want to do so. No matter why they learn Chinese, this kind of learning behaviour tends to be their own initiative rather than coerced. The role of parents in this stage is much more like a supporter than a decision maker. Parents sometimes also act as a helper, since some of them are native Chinese language speakers. They could provide some academic assistance in these adolescents' language learning process. Peers' influence declines in this period, since fewer youngsters would like to spend their precious class time of preparing for the VCE to socialise and have fun with their friends. They have other recreational methods to connect with their friends.

Second, though parents' influence in the decision to learn the Chinese language decreases gradually with Chinese-Australian children's growing up, parents continue to play an essential role in the whole process. Without parents' support and assistance, it would not be possible for Chinese-Australian children to speak both Chinese and English fluently and thus live in a dual-track cultural environment. This has mainly resulted from the language environment that their parents have created for them.

For children who live in an environment where one language is dominant, language choice is not difficult. During the process of their growing up, the language they use both to communicate with family and to socialise with others is the same language. This language is also their first language. The pursuit of a second or a third language always happens with explicit purposes, such as to pass an exam, to meet the requirement of job hunting, or to achieve self-satisfaction. Therefore, it is explainable that once their language skills meet the

requirement, or once their aim becomes implicit, their motivation to learn the second language declines.

Take children who were born in China and grow up in China as an example. The Chinese language is their native language, which they develop unconsciously or intentionally during their daily communication with family and friends, as well as in socialisation with the other people. Also, in China an overwhelming majority of educated children learn English as a second language to enhance their overall skills. Some of them even develop a third language. During this process, their first language skill continuously develops until it reaches a stable level that could fulfil basic communication and work requirements. However, second language attrition occurs among most of Chinese children once they meet the requirements of study or work, or lose the language environment. What we could find from this process is that because of the language environment, parents do not have much influence on children's language learning and language choice. Children develop their first language naturally and learn a second language according to their needs. What parents could do in this situation is provide encouragement and support.

Nevertheless, the interviews with children who live in a dual cultural environment and speak dual languages indicate that language learning and using for them is more complicated. What is obvious is that they live in an environment where English is the mainstream language and is widely spoken in most settings in Australia. Meanwhile, they grow up in a Chinese-speaking community where Chinese is the most convenient language to communicate with. This complex cultural environment poses a high requirement and challenge to Chinese-Australian children, since they must grasp two languages to conduct normal socialisation, as well as to maintain basic ties with the Chinese community.

According to participant observations, both the second-generation immigrant children, who were born in Australia, and those 1.75 generation immigrant children, who migrated to Australia at an early age, experience the change of environment from Chinese-dominated to English-dominated. Before they attend school, the Chinese language is their primary language. However, after they start primary school, from when they have a stable relationship with their peers, teachers and other social networks, their English language ability develops much faster and more comprehensively than their Chinese language ability. This is because they have a fully immersed language environment to learn, practise and develop their English language ability.

In contrast, because of the lack of language environment and motivation to learn, the development of their Chinese language ability comes slowly. In this case, a strong external force is needed to maintain, support and even force the development of their Chinese language ability, and this force is their parents. In fact, Chinese parents play a vital role in helping children to develop their bilingual ability, as well as their overall ability to communicate and live better in the dual-track culturalisation process, which has been examined in Section 3.2.1.

The third characteristic is the continuous influence exerted by external environmental factors. Data collected from fieldwork suggests that during the whole process environmental factors continuously exert influence and pressure on children's determination to learn the Chinese language. From the economic-political perspective, the rise of China as well as Australia's strategic shift towards Asia enhance the importance of English-Chinese bilingual skills. It is practically beneficial to grasp the Chinese language for school-aged Chinese Australians.

Interviewee 89 (17; F; 5 September 2017), a first-year student in The University of Melbourne, who was born in Melbourne and whose parents are both from China, said that 'it

was unbelievable that the past decades witnessed the increase of the Chinese people in Australia. I felt China was becoming stronger than ever before, which motivated me to keep learning the Chinese language'. Interviewee 89 also expressed her interest in hunting jobs requiring bilingual ability or even jobs in China in the future.

From the socio-cultural perspective, Chinese culture is interesting, inclusive and attractive. In recent decades more Chinese elements, such as restaurants, festivals, and Sinophone movies, have become easily accessible in Australia. It has also become a tradition that Chinese-Australian children go back to China with their parents for sightseeing or visiting family members. The cultural environment also pushes Chinese-Australian children to learn and use the Chinese language.

From the perspective of the local community, the Chinese language is dominantly spoken in the suburbs where Chinese migrants are located. No matter whether for socialisation or for daily communication, it would be convenient and beneficial if the children could speak Chinese. In the family setting, Chinese is also the main language to communicate with, especially for the family with senior family members who cannot speak English fluently. Therefore, the continuous influence exerted by external economic, political, cultural and social factors also contributes to school-aged Chinese Australians' enthusiasm to learn and use the Chinese language.

### **3.3 Understanding the hierarchical structure of motivational factors**

After analysing how the Chinese-Australian families make the decision to send their children to learn the Chinese language, the most significant issue is to examine how the children and adolescents are motivated. That is, why have they been learning Chinese?

The driving forces behind heritage language learning behaviours have been well documented in the literature (Baker, 2003; Carreira & Kagan, 2011; Cho, 2000; Cho, Cho, & Tse, 1997; He & Xiao, 2008; McGinnis, 2005a; Mu, 2014, 2015a; Tse, 2001), and within this there are indeed some items discussing this issue as it occurs among Chinese overseas school-aged children (Chow, 2001; Comănaru & Noels, 2009; Mu, 2014; Setijadi, 2015; X. Wang, 2015; Wen, 1997). However, these analyses are unsystematic and not enough to provide a complete picture.

First, some studies did not distinguish the heritage language use from the second language use. They applied the motivations for learning the second language in analysing those for learning the heritage language, which ignores the specialities of the Chinese language use by school-aged Chinese migrants (X. Lu, 2007; Lu & Li, 2008; Mu, 2015; Wen, 2011; Wong & Xiao, 2010; Yang, 2003). Second, the previous analyses contributed to enumerating and classifying the various specific motivations to several types. However, they did not take this issue as a complete and systematic hierarchy to discuss. Third, among the motivations mentioned by the current literature, Gardner and Lambert's motivation theory (Gardner & Lambert, 1959, 1972), Norton's investment theory (Norton, 1995, 2000) and Bourdieu's theory of capital (Bourdieu & Thompson, 1991) have been widely applied and explored to analyse the motivation issues. However, these studies overly emphasised the utilitarian motivations to learn and maintain the heritage language, discussing this issue from a one-sided perspective, which was not systematic and comprehensive (Weger-Guntharp, 2006; Wong & Xiao, 2010; Mu, 2015). Fourth, the independence and individuality of the migrants had been considered in the existing research, while the collective behaviours of the group of migrants, which is also one of the special characteristics of the migrant community, is a vital and interesting but under-researched phenomenon in both theoretical and empirical findings.

Especially in the topic about Chinese heritage language maintenance, the behavioural conformity was neglected in the previous studies.

To deal with the problems mentioned above, this section analyses the school-aged Chinese Australians' motivations to learn and maintain the Chinese language systematically.

According to the different levels of Chinese migrants' understanding, this section first discusses the multiple motives that encourage the children and adolescents to learn and use the Chinese language. These motivations include conformity to community practices, instrument-oriented motivations, and culture-oriented motivations. Then, a hierarchical structure of motives is provided.

### **3.3.1 Conformity to community practices**

According to participant observations, Chinese migrants who moved to Australia were uprooted from their familiar cultural environment, and have settled in a new and unfamiliar environment. In this setting, some of them tend to follow their peers' behaviour to seek psychological safety. Also, because they live in a new land and are uncertain about future relations between Australia and China, as well as what China will be like in the future, learning the Chinese language is also a kind of risk-avoidance behaviour. This behaviour occurs not because of certain explicit reasons, but because of the uncertainties brought by the sudden disconnection with their home culture. This type of behaviour is led by the joint forces of community culture and conformity tendency, under the pressure of which, Chinese migrants learn and use the Chinese language.

The existing studies attributed this issue either to the aim of maintaining cultural roots or to utilitarian purposes. Indeed, either instrumentally or culturally oriented motivations are important when we consider this issue. However, these discussions ignored the special cultural and language environment where Chinese migrants lived. For some Chinese

migrants, especially parents whose children are still at an early age, the decision of sending children to learn Chinese is made mainly because they want to follow and imitate what others do. They do not have any special reason or aim to motivate their children to learn the language. This phenomenon is of vital importance but is under-researched in the existing literature. This thesis provides a new angle to help understand this issue.

New migrants who have been suddenly disconnected from their mother culture lose the cultural symbols, customs and environment they are familiar with. Migration is just like a sudden power that severs the relationship between Chinese migrants and their past. Also, it is difficult for them to predict whether the Chinese language will be useful in the future. In this case, what they should do and what they will do are under the influence of their peers. To learn and use Chinese not only facilitates the new migrants' lives, but also provides them with psychological safety.

Analysis of data indicates that Chinese migrant parents who make the decision for this reason usually tend to be those whose children are at an early age, or who have less insight about this rapidly changing society. They would like to follow the decision made by the opinion leader in the Chinese community. Their psychological safety could be obtained through the feeling of being a member of the group. Apart from avoiding uncertainty and obtaining psychological safety, their decision to send their children to learn Chinese is always affected by the following factors.

The first factor is children's attitude. The implicit children's attitude towards learning the Chinese language to some extent invigorates their parents' enthusiasm. Interviewee 13 (44; F; 25 March 2017), a Chinese parent, said that her child was neither resistant nor interested in learning Chinese, so she would keep sending her child to the Chinese community school until the child said 'No'. This is a common phenomenon in the Chinese community. Among the 34

interviewees providing valid responses to this issue, which included both parents and children, there were seven who took this reason as the first reason when they were asked the question, ‘Why did you send your children to learn the Chinese language?’ or ‘Why did you come here to learn Chinese?’. All Chinese children of the seven families are studying in low grades, ranging from Prep to Year 2.

The second incentive is the Chinese language environment that children live in. Though English is the mainstream language that children speak in Australia, being able to speak Chinese in the Chinese community is almost required. In the family setting, most Chinese parents and almost all Chinese grandparents speak Chinese languages. Chinese is also widely spoken in Chinese community life, such as shopping, entertainment and daily socialisation. Immersed in the bilingual environment, some Chinese children learn and use the Chinese language out of the consideration of taking use of the Chinese language environment. The Chinese language environment provides Chinese-Australian children with convenience to learn, practise and use the language they learn in school giving them an advantage over other children.

The last factor is that most Chinese children have some basic knowledge of the Chinese language before they attend the Prep-schooling class. This is because during the period between when they start to babble and when they attend the kindergarten and get to know more peers, the people they most frequently interacted with are their family members, and the most frequently spoken language is Chinese. In this case, Chinese parents mostly take this as a benefit and believe that it is a waste of effort if their children do not keep learning the Chinese language. Most of these opinion followers do not want their children to be proficient in speaking the Chinese language. Rather, they just take this as suffering losses if others do so while they do not do so. A Chinese parent who has two children aged four and five said:

Since my child now could speak Chinese, and he has some basic knowledge of the Chinese language, and we all speak the Chinese language at home, I would like to send him to the Chinese class to learn the Chinese language. (Interviewee 5, 28; F; 11 March 2017)

Overall, some Chinese migrants prefer to follow the decision made by the opinion leader in the Chinese community. This happens mainly in the group of Chinese migrants whose children are in the lower grade or the parents have less social experience or insight about the society. They follow what others do to seek psychological safety and in case the ability to speak Chinese will be of use in the future. Three contextual factors discussed above also motivate Chinese parents to send their children to learn the Chinese language.

### **3.3.2 Instrumental motivations**

According to the analysis of data, the motivational factor ‘interest’, as well as the three motivational factors to be discussed in the following sections, which are ‘communication’, ‘competition’ and ‘prospects’, are instrument-oriented motivations. The children and adolescents with an instrument-oriented motivation want to fulfil their needs through language learning. The needs include both practical needs and psychological needs.

Some children learn the Chinese language because of their interest in it and Chinese culture, and they want to develop that interest through the Chinese language learning behaviours. Some children with the ‘communication’ motivation want to increase their communicative ability with both family members and other Chinese people they socialise with. Children with the ‘competition’ motivation want to either increase their examination result in the VCE or improve their bilingual ability to hunt for a decent job. Children with ‘prospects’ motivation believe the Chinese language will be useful in the future because of the rise of China, and they want to have more possibilities in the future. Considering these four types of motivation,

this part analyses Chinese migrants' language learning behaviour from a utilitarian perspective and examines how the motivation happened successively with the increase in the Chinese migrants' levels of understanding.

### **3.3.2.1 Developing interest**

As Deci (1992) argued that interest existed in the relationship between a person and an activity, it is important to consider whether the affordability of the activity, that is to say the expectation of learning a language, conforms to the enjoyment, fulfilment and achievement brought to the learner by the learning activity. Whether one's interest in learning something is enough or not is of importance, since it supports the learner's continuity of activity. If a child has strong interest in learning a language, there is more chance that he or she will keep learning and practising the language.

Interviews with Chinese-Australian children and adolescents suggest that developing their interest in obtaining more knowledge about the Chinese culture through learning the Chinese language is a utilitarian consideration. Australian children with Chinese origin in lower-intermediate grades tend to have this motivation. In addition, adolescents who have graduated from high school may also continue to learn Chinese due to the 'interest' motivation. However, few high-grade Chinese adolescents are motivated to learn the Chinese due to interest.

Interviewee 36 (7; M; 10 June 2017), an Indonesian-Chinese child, said, 'I like learning languages. I think speaking different languages is so cool. I think learning Chinese is interesting and useful, so I like learning Chinese'. Interviewee 85 (45; F; 2 September 2017), a parent whose child was in Year 6, supposed that learning the Chinese language for her child was a natural process without any coercion and her child was interested in learning and speaking Chinese.

Interviewee 89 (17; F; 5 September 2017), who just graduated from high school and chose to enrol in a Chinese subject in the university, expressed that she liked learning the Chinese language from an early age. However, after entering the high grades in the secondary school, she felt pressured because of the VCE. What she learned during that time was mostly examination-oriented, but less interesting. So, when she attended the university, she chose the Chinese subjects she was interested in to improve and develop her Chinese language skills. From these cases, we could deduce that apart from the higher-grade students who may be busy with preparing for the VCE, interest is an important reason that motivates Chinese-Australian children and adolescents to learn and use the Chinese language.

A point to draw attention here is that ‘interest’ motivation is more prominent among the Australian children who are not from mainland China or have no Chinese background but have Chinese ethnicity, such as some from Southeast Asian countries. This group of children do not have sufficient language environment to practise the Chinese language, and they do not have AN urgent need to communicate with their family members or community members in Chinese. Most of them express their interest in learning the Chinese language and understanding the Chinese culture through the Chinese language learning. However, the ‘interest’ motivation seems not that important among the children with mainland China background.

### **3.3.2.2 Improving communicative skills**

Data from interviews and observations indicates that differing from those with implicit motivations to learn the Chinese language, some Chinese-Australian children and adolescents are motivated by a clear driving force, which is the ‘communication’ motivation. With the Chinese migrants’ increased level of understanding, some of them are aware that if they don’t maintain and develop their Chinese language ability, it will be difficult for them to communicate in some settings.

The motivation to improve communicative skills is prominent among the Chinese heritage language learners, especially among Chinese families who migrated to Australia several decades ago. It is common that some people migrated to Australia to reunite with their family. However, some of them, especially the senior family members, usually are unable to communicate in English. This, joined with the Chinese-speaking environment in the Chinese community, motivates some Chinese-Australian children to learn Chinese to have better communication. Family communication and daily socialisation with other people are two major settings.

On one hand, to communicate with family members is an important motivation. For second-generation immigrant children, their parents' English communicative ability is a significant factor when they consider whether to learn Chinese and how much effort they would like to make. Children's motivation to learn Chinese is weak if their parents are fluent in English, because they can communicate in English. However, for the children whose parents cannot speak English fluently, this motivation is stronger. To maintain daily communication, some children learn Chinese and combine it with English to communicate with their parents, which is an interesting phenomenon to be further discussed in Chapter 5.

The communication motivation is even more important among the children who live with their grandparents. To reunite with family members, many Chinese senior generations move to stay with their children who have migrated to Australia. It is the case that an overwhelming majority of the Chinese senior people cannot speak English at all, even some simple words. This poses a challenge to their grandchildren. They have to learn the Chinese language in order to maintain family conversation and family ties. Even for children whose grandparents are still in China, to communicate with their grandparents is also a crucial reason for them to learn Chinese. When asked why they send their children to learn the Chinese language, a parent said:

Otherwise, she could not speak the Chinese language. It is mainly because my parents are currently looking after my daughter, and they could not speak English at all. The conversation between the three generations has to be conducted in the Chinese language. Actually, I am not that persistent in persuading my daughter to use the Chinese language, but my parents are persistent in doing so. (Interviewee 91, 37; F; 9 September 2017)

However, though to communicate with grandparents is a motivational factor that pushes some Chinese children to learn the Chinese language, the conversation among generations is usually superficial, discussing some trivial things about daily life. Interviewee 91 also expressed, ‘the dialogue between my parents and my child mainly is revolved around the topics of foods or drinks and they did not have deep communication’.

On the other hand, to be communicative in some social settings is also an important consideration. Due to the close relationship between the overseas Chinese community and China, Chinese children have a high possibility of having some interactions with people speaking Chinese, such as when they travel in China. A parent who has two daughters aged 16 and six respectively said:

I repeated to my children that we would go back to China regularly. It would be inconvenient if you could not speak the Chinese language at all. I did not expect that they could use the Chinese language as fluently as the children born in China, while I hoped they could know what others were talking about and I hoped they could keep this language. (Interviewee 105, 44; F; 29 September 2017)

When asked why you are here to learn the Chinese language, Interviewee 50 (6; M; 16 June 2017), a Year-2 child said, ‘my mom said it would be convenient when I talked to the people in the Chinese community and when I went back to China’.

### 3.3.2.3 Improving competitive skills

The data collected from the fieldwork indicates that developing competitive skills, including in examinations and the job market, is indeed one of the most important reasons why some Chinese-Australian children learn the Chinese language. This section also situates this level of motivation in the systematic and complete hierarchical structure of the motivation of migrants' language learning, which is discussed in Section 3.3.4.

The analysis of data suggests that with the increase of Chinese-Australian children's age, as well as their insight into their future and the society, some become aware of the practical benefits that learning the Chinese language could bring. In the short term, they could get bonus points and thus get a high mark in the VCE Chinese subject through learning Chinese. This could directly influence what university they are able to attend. In the long run, being bilingual is an important and necessary ability in the future job market and the ever-globalised society. Developing Chinese language skills can make Chinese-Australian youngsters become more competitive in the future.

Specifically, the motivation of obtaining the bonus points in the examination and thus becoming competitive in the examination is prominent in the case of Chinese-Australian adolescents when they consider whether to learn the Chinese language or not. Because of the educational policy in Australia, students could obtain bonus points if they perform well in a certain subject in addition to the normal points of the certificates of examination. It is easier for them than non-Chinese-background students to get a higher mark if they choose the Chinese subject. This is admitted by an overwhelming majority of Chinese students in the high grades<sup>8</sup> who choose Chinese as one of their subjects in VCE. As Interviewee 78 (15; M; 26 August 2017) said, 'I continued to learn the Chinese language because we wanted to get

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<sup>8</sup> Higher level students here refer to students in Year 10 to Year 12 who prepare for the VCE.

the bonus points in the VCE Chinese subject’; to be competitive in the examination is one of the strong motivations for many Chinese adolescents to learn and to use the Chinese language. Some parents whose children are in the lower grades also expressed anxiety about the graduation examination. A parent whose child was in Year 2 class said:

I sent my child to the Chinese language out of the utilitarian consideration. Though my child was still too young to consider the issue of what subjects to be chosen in VCE, it would be impossible to choose the Chinese subject if we did not send her to learn it now. (Interviewee 10, 38; F; 18 March 2017)

To develop the bilingual ability and thus to be competitive in the future also motivates children and adolescents to learn the Chinese language. Because of the expansion of the Chinese community and the increase in the Chinese population in Australia, the need for Chinese language use in different settings is also greater than before. Mastery of the Chinese language is beneficial for Chinese-Australian youngsters’ future career. They believe that if they can grasp Chinese, it will be of help in their job hunting.

A girl whose parents are both from mainland China just graduated from the high school. She believed in the usefulness of the Chinese language ability and she argued:

Bilingual ability was important in the future job hunting. For example, I was majoring in the biomedical science, and if I could speak the Chinese language, I could serve more Chinese patients in the future. Therefore, I learned the Chinese language from an early age, and I was going to enrol in some Chinese subjects in the university.

(Interviewee 89, 17; F; 5 September 2017)

### 3.3.2.4 Fulfilling prospect

To be competitive in the examination and in the job market is a superficial and relatively short-term need that motivates Chinese-Australian children to learn the Chinese language. In other words, obtaining high marks or hunting a prospective job are much more like obtaining something tangible, practical and physical. Chinese migrants with this motivation, though more purposeful and instrument-oriented than the ones who just follow others blindly, they still lack the insight and prospect about their future and the whole society in the future.

According to the fieldwork, some Chinese migrants have more in-depth understanding and prospects about the rise of China, the ever-changing Sino-Australian relations and the rapidly developing society. In contrast with the immigrants discussed above, they presume that mastery of the Chinese language could provide them with more choices in the future and give them more confidence when they are faced with the possibilities.

In the broad sense, people with this motivation believe that the grasp of one more language could provide them with more possibilities in the future. In the globalised society, 'highly advanced technology has given rise to the extreme physical and virtual mobility of talent worldwide' (Wang & Liu, 2016, p. 2). With potential transnational talents, the Chinese-Australian children have a high possibility not to stay in one place for their whole life. Staying in Australia, seeking opportunities in China, or developing their career in the globalised platform is still not certain for them.

Taking this into consideration, some Chinese families make a decision to send their children to learn the Chinese language, with the aim of opening up more possibilities for their children. The female parent we just mentioned in the last section said, 'I wanted to provide more choices for my son. To go to China or to stay here, to speak the Chinese language or the

English language should be decided by him in the future' (Interviewee 10, 38; F; 18 March 2017).

Another interesting and vivid case is from Interviewee 88's family. Interviewee 88 (45; F; 2 September) is now a teacher of the Year 5 class. She came to Australia in 1995, with her older daughter born in China and younger daughter born in Australia. The older daughter came to Australia at seven years old and continued to learn the Chinese language after migrating to Australia. After several years working in Australia, the older daughter decided to go back to China to seek better opportunities. Interviewee 88 said, 'my daughter is currently working at a foreign-capital entrepreneur in Shanghai, and the grasp of the Chinese language and the fluent use of two languages brought advantages to her when she hunted a job' (Interviewee 88, 45; F; 2 September).

In the narrow sense, Chinese migrants aiming to fulfil prospects suppose that the rise of China and the ever-close relations between China and Australia increase the importance of fluency in the Chinese language. A parent from Beijing who has experienced China's rapid development believed in the rise of China, and he supposed that '21 century had been witnessing the globalising and modernising of China; to survive and to thrive, learning the Chinese language was necessary' (Interviewee 11, 35; M; 18 March 2017).

Interviewee 82 (29; F; 2 September 2017) obtained a Master's degree in accounting several years ago and now is working at a local accounting company. She has a four-year old son who has just started to learn the Chinese language in Prep class. She expressed her expectation about her son's Chinese ability: 'China is becoming stronger than before. If he could not speak the Chinese language, it would be difficult for him to go back to China' (Interviewee 82, 29; F; 2 September 2017). Interviewee 34 (11; F; 27 May 2017), a girl in

Year 7, said, 'China was the top country... No, not the top, but China was everywhere and got stronger than before, so learning Chinese would be useful in the future'.

### **3.3.3 Culture-oriented motivations**

Though analysis from an instrumental perspective sheds light on why immigrant children learn and maintain the heritage language, it overly emphasises the utilitarianism of the heritage language learning and ignores that to get close to and to maintain a culture are also important considerations when someone learns a language. Especially in the case of Chinese-Australian children, the issue of culture-oriented motivation of Chinese language learning behaviours is under-researched and needs to be analysed systematically.

Based on the analysis of data collected from fieldwork, the cultural orientation is divided into two levels according to Chinese migrants' level of understanding, with the lower one being conformity and the higher one being cultural belonging.

#### **3.3.3.1 Conformity of appearance and language**

When we discuss the connection of language and culture, it comes to the topics of cultural belonging, cultural roots and cultural identity. Admittedly, the deepest level of migrants' psychological need is important and is worthwhile to analyse. However, the current literature ignores that some migrants did so not because of the cultural maintenance consideration, but because of the expectation of conformity of appearance and language. Therefore, this motivation is an important but under-researched factor when we discuss the motivation issue.

Migrants with this motivation become aware of the importance of language learning and speaking in their cultural maintenance. However, their cognition is not high enough for them to understand the role that the language they speak plays in the process of cultural identity forming and constructing. The language is regarded as a bridge that connects language

speakers to the cultural context associated with that language. Some Chinese migrants, therefore, suppose that they learn the Chinese language for Chinese cultural maintenance. However, they do not realise that what they pursue is just something like conformity. This includes the conformity of appearance and language as well as the conformity among family members.

For the former ones, they do not care what language their children learn and whether they can keep the cultural roots of that language. Rather, what they care about is whether their children can speak the language that they are expected to speak. For the latter ones, what really matters is that, as members of the family, their children should share the same language and the same cultural identity. As long as the language their children speak conforms with the language they speak, they are satisfied. Therefore, for the heritage language learners with this motivation, to maintain the culture and to attach to the mother culture are not their authentic purposes. However, to reach cultural conformity and to meet others' expectation are their purposes, which is a superficially culture-oriented motivation.

Specifically, some Chinese migrants with the 'conformity' motivation believe that since they have a Chinese face, their children should know how to speak the Chinese language.

Interviewee 19 (37; M; 6 May 2017), a Singaporean parent, said, 'no matter how fluently my child could speak the English language, others might think he has a "yellow" skin so he should be able to speak the Chinese language'. An Australian-born Chinese student who just graduated from high school said:

People expected I could speak the Chinese language. When I went back to China, people thought that I could speak the Chinese language because of my appearance. If I said that I was not good at speaking the Chinese language, others thought it was strange or maybe I was showing off. (Interviewee 90, 17; F; 5 September 2017)

To maintain conformity of appearance and language and to meet expectations, many Chinese-Australian children and adolescents choose to learn the Chinese language.

Another group of Chinese migrants with this motivation believe that the whole family should share the same cultural identity and belonging, and they should speak the same language.

This does not mean that they send their children to learn the Chinese language out of the aim to keep their Chinese origin, but because they want to achieve family conformity with regard to the language they speak. Interviewee 14 (45; M; 25 March 2017) said, ‘my parents were Chinese, I was Chinese and of course, my children should be Chinese and should be able to speak the Chinese language. I thought the Chinese language was our mother language’. The motivation of family conformity is pointed out in this part to generate the complete hierarchical structure of motivations, with the conflicts between Chinese children and their parents regarding the issue of language and identity to be discussed in Chapter 6.

### **3.3.3.2 Cultural belonging**

Language and culture have a homologous relation. A particular language is attached to the culture it belongs to and is a vital part of a certain culture. ‘Learning a language is not only learning the alphabet, the meaning, but it is also learning the behaviour of the society and its cultural customs’ (Guessabi, 2011). Through learning the language, migrants could better understand the cultural meanings and customs of a particular culture; they could get close to and become attached to the particular culture; also, they could identify themselves as part of that culture.

The functions of getting close to a particular culture as well as obtaining and maintaining the cultural belonging through language learning, are not easily recognised by everyone.

According to data analysis, some people just believe erroneously that what speaking the Chinese language could bring them is only conformity between the appearance and the

language. They underestimate the cultural benefits that speaking Chinese could bring them. In contrast, some Chinese migrants with in-depth understanding of the society realise the importance of language in getting to know Chinese culture and maintaining cultural ties and roots.

Put it in detail, the cultural belonging is of vital importance, especially to the Chinese migrants who live thousands of kilometres away from their motherland. This is because the ability to speak Chinese could help them know and understand what happened and what is happening in China, and to perceive and attach to the Chinese society and culture, as well as communicate with Chinese people when they are in China. This perception and knowledge could not be obtained and understood well through translated and interpreted information. Unlike the migrants with conformity motivation, which is the lower-level cultural motivation, some Chinese migrants understand profoundly the importance of language in cultural inheritance. They believe that their cultural roots are Chinese, and learning the language of this culture could help them maintain their roots and seek for cultural belonging. ‘When I spoke the Chinese language, I felt like that I was a Chinese person and I had some relation with the Chinese culture’, Interviewee 73 (14; F, 19 August 2017), a Year 10 student, said.

For Chinese-Australian children at an early age, their motivations to obtain and to maintain the Chinese identity and cultural belonging is usually expressed through their parents.

Chinese children at lower grades always have blurred perception of cultural identity. Most of them implicitly express their mixed and combined culture identity of both the Chinese and the Australian. However, some of their parents explicitly believe that they want their children to keep their Chinese roots and identity. A parent who currently works in an IT company said:

My daughter now was only four years old and studied in the Prep class in the Chinese community school. I hoped she would maintain the Chinese language as well as the Chinese cultural background for long. I hoped that she could keep learning the Chinese language because she was a Chinese person. (Interviewee 93, 30; M; 9 September 2019)

Some of the Chinese-Australian youngsters in higher grades have a clearer and more explicit perception of the society and themselves. They know that learning and speaking the Chinese language could not only bring them some practical benefits, such as obtaining bonus points in the exam, or developing their communicative ability, it could also help them to identify themselves culturally and obtain the cultural belonging. In this case they would not be lost if they were asked what their cultural identity is. Interviewee 79 (15; M; 26 August 2017), in Year 11, said, 'I thought we were Chinese people and we should maintain the Chinese language. It helped me to remember that I had the Chinese ethnicity and the Chinese cultural belonging'.

Though we acknowledge that Chinese migrants could obtain and maintain Chinese cultural belonging through learning and speaking the Chinese language, it does not necessarily mean that we deny their Australian identity and they have only one cultural identity. Due to the dual-cultural environment Chinese-Australian children live in, many of them, indeed, have a mixed cultural identity of both Chinese and Australian. However, because these children live in a cultural environment that is far away from their mother culture, they sometimes have a stronger desire to learn and to keep this language in case they lose their cultural roots. The issue of cultural identity is discussed in detail in Chapter 7.

### 3.3.4 The hierarchical structure of motivations

According to the analysis of data from interviews and participant observations, this section offers a hierarchical structure of motivations to analyse why Chinese-Australian children are sent to the community school to learn the Chinese language and why they use this language in different settings. As discussed in Section 3.2, the decision to learn and use Chinese language is made by the whole migrant family rather than the Chinese-Australian children themselves, so the level of understanding to be discussed also refers to the understanding and comprehensive ability of the whole Chinese migrant family, leaving the conflicts between parents and children to be discussed in Chapter 6.

As discussed above, a wide range of factors contribute to different levels of Chinese-Australian migrants' understanding, such as Chinese parents' educational background, children's cognition and insight, and the whole family's social class and social experience. Moreover, the psychological change because of the shift of environment would also shape how the migrants view the society. No matter why Chinese migrants moved to Australia, they have been uprooted from the cultural environment and cultural routines that they are used to. In this case, they may feel unsafe about the current living environment and uncertain about what the future will be like. Therefore, in contrast to people who are born and live in their home country, it is necessary to consider the special psychological condition of migrants when we discuss the issue of their choice of language.

Taking the speciality of overseas Chinese and their different levels of comprehensive ability into consideration, this hierarchical structure analyses Chinese migrants' individuality and conformity tendency in the process of their decision making, language learning and language maintaining. This structure supposes that with the increase in their level of understanding,

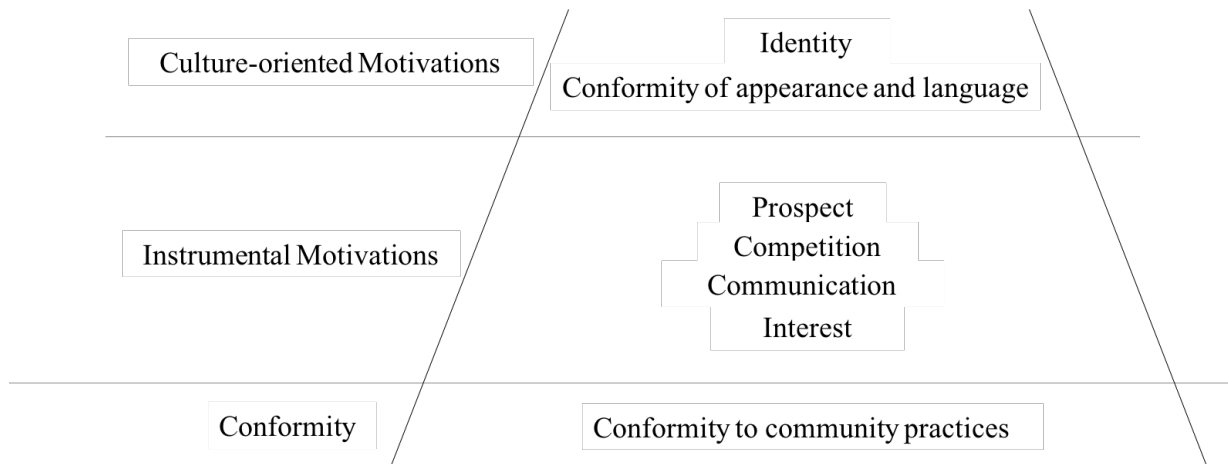
Chinese-Australian children's motivation to learn and to use the Chinese language is more explicit and culture oriented.

In this structure, Chinese migrants with a lower level of understanding ability learn the Chinese language, mostly out of their uncertainty about the future. Since they just follow what opinion leaders in the community do, they are situated at the bottom of the hierarchical structure.

With growth in their comprehensive ability, instrumentally oriented motivations—such as developing the language interest, meeting the requirements of communication, improving the competitive ability and seeking for better prospects—become more important to Chinese migrants.

Positioned on the top of the hierarchical structure are the group of Chinese migrants with good educational backgrounds and in-depth insight of the whole society, and they are aware of the importance of the maintenance and development of their heritage language rather than just following their peers to learn the Chinese language.

This hierarchical structure is portrayed in Figure 3.2, describing the process in which the motivations for Chinese-Australian children to learn the Chinese language generally change with their levels of understanding increasing.



**Figure 3.2 The hierarchical structure of motivations**

*Source: Proposed by the author based on the fieldwork conducted in multiple schools.*

### **3.4 The complexity and dynamics of motivational factors**

In the previous sections, this thesis discussed who influences children to make the decision to learn the Chinese language and what motivates the children and adolescents to learn and to use it, which are the relatively static explanations of the issue. The analysis of data indicates that the motivation issue is not a simple question. Rather, it is jointly contributed by the efforts of a variety of sides of people and different motivations.

In this section the complexity and the dynamics, which are two special characteristics of this issue, are further explored and analysed. This is because, in a certain period, why children learn and use the Chinese language is always led by the joint result of several motivations, rather than the sole influence of one certain motivation. Moreover, the ‘Why learn?’ question is even more complicated for school-aged Chinese Australians. They make decisions not only with the consideration of their own prospects, but also of the rapidly changing and developing international relations and the conditions of both Australia and China. This means that their motivation to learn and use the Chinese language is a dynamic process. Only if the

complexity and the dynamics are taken into account could we understand the ‘motivation’ issue systematically and comprehensively.

### **3.4.1 The complexity of motivational factors**

Though the hierarchical structure put forward above lays out and analyses different motivations according to the Chinese migrants’ levels of understanding, it does not necessarily mean that Chinese-Australian children are motivated solely by one factor. Indeed, multiple motivations co-exert influence simultaneously on the Chinese children and jointly motivate them to learn and to use the Chinese language. Specifically, this complexity has several following features.

First, a minority of Chinese-Australian children are motivated to learn the Chinese language by one sole factor when they are in a special period. For example, some Chinese parents are absolute followers in the decision-making process to send their children to the Chinese community school. These parents are always the group of people whose children just attend the school and do not have much pressure for the exam and the future. Therefore, making the decision to learn Chinese is a low-risk investment and could also help them to avoid the uncertainty which has been analysed before. Once their children step into the higher grades and their time management becomes important, whether to continue to learn Chinese becomes complicated and is decided by many other factors. Solely counting on following the opinion leaders could not support the children to learn Chinese for many years, especially when the children step into higher grades and their self-consciousness increases.

Some adolescents learn Chinese solely due to the ‘competition’ motivation in a certain period. They usually tend to be the ones in the higher grades, from Year 10 to Year 12. This is because adolescents in these grades usually prepare themselves to attend the VCE. Because of the educational policy in Australia, it is common that students with Chinese background

are better able to obtain the bonus points in the entrance examination for university. Since students' time and effort in this period is limited and precious, the subjects they choose usually are the ones that they are strong in and could take advantage of, rather than the ones they are just interested in. Therefore, many Chinese adolescents in this special stage are solely motivated to get the high grade in the Chinese examination and to be competitive in the entrance examination of university.

Second, though some children are motivated by a sole factor to learn Chinese, the majority of them learn and use it because of a combination of several motivations. The combined motivation could be a mixture of conformity to community practices and instrumental motivations, the motivation of conformity to community practices and culture-oriented motivations, and instrumental motivations and culture-oriented motivation. A majority of the interviewees expressed their multiple motivations to learn the Chinese language. For example, a Chinese student in Year 11 said, 'I was here to learn the Chinese language because of the bonus points in the VCE Chinese subject. Moreover, I thought I was a Chinese and maintaining the Chinese language is necessary' (Interviewee 79, 16; M; 26 August 2017).

Third, the combination is not random and is also closely related to the Chinese migrants' levels of understanding and their cognition. The respondents who are characterised as 'followers' may mention that cultural factors also affect their decision of whether to learn the Chinese language or not. However, this consideration always stays in the lower level, rather than the 'cultural belonging' motivation. For example, several 'followers' believed that they had yellow faces and their children should speak Chinese; however, when asked why people with yellow faces should speak Chinese, they could not say something specific and meaningful.

Another example is that the respondents who want to maintain their Chinese roots, and to keep their Chinese identity via Chinese language learning, usually not only consider the short-term benefits that learning the Chinese language could bring, such as developing the communicative and competitive abilities, but also are aware of the profound and lasting influence and benefits that follow. That is, that being bilingual could provide them with more opportunities in the future and give them better prospects.

### **3.4.2 The dynamics of motivational factors**

Chinese children's motivations to learn the Chinese language are not static, but keep changing. With Chinese migrants' social experience increasing and the extrinsic social environment changing, the 'Why?' question of the Chinese language learning behaviours by Chinese-Australian children should be discussed from a dynamic perspective. Though data in this research is obtained from the fieldwork that was conducted within three years, stepping into the classrooms from Prep-schooling class to the Year 12 class could provide us with a glimpse of the dynamic process of what the children and adolescents' behaviours are, throughout their growing-up process. Following are some features of this dynamic process.

First, in general, as the children grow up their motivation to learn the Chinese language changes from 'following others' to 'instrument oriented'. As discussed above, children in lower grades learn Chinese language usually because their peers also learn it. Their parents send them to learn Chinese because it is a low-risk investment and a kind of collective behaviour. They do so without a specific motivation. However, this could not last if the children did not find learning Chinese beneficial, both practically and psychologically. Some give up learning the language while others keep on learning. The latter are motivated by some other utilitarian factors, such as developing an interest or increasing their communicative and competitive ability. They assume that being able to speak Chinese could bring some benefits

to them. A majority of Chinese-Australian students in Year 11 or 12 are motivated by the bonus points they could obtain in the Chinese examination.

Second, for most Chinese migrants the culture-oriented motivations exist throughout the school period. Some Chinese migrants who do not have in-depth understanding of the society believe that being able to speak the Chinese language conforms with their appearance. Others who are aware of the importance of cultural maintenance and cultural belonging believe that the ability to speak Chinese could help them to be attached to their mother culture. Because of the different levels of understanding, Chinese migrants express their different motivations. However, cultural factors motivate the children to learn and to use the Chinese language, exerting subtle influence on their language learning behaviours. This is also why some of them who graduate from high school express their interest in choosing some Chinese subjects in their upcoming university course.

Third, this hierarchical motivational structure does not remain unchanged; rather, it will change continuously and be affected by the external environment, such as the language and education policy in Australia, the development of China and Sino-Australian relations. A teacher with rich experience in teaching VCE Chinese subject said:

It was predicted by many policymakers that the educational policy would be amended in the near future. If there were no bonus points in the graduating examination in the future, the number of Chinese children to learn the Chinese language would decrease significantly. The children who do not have strong interest or do not have strong cultural belonging might give up learning the Chinese language. (Interviewee 3, 43; M; 16 September 2017)

The recent development of China and the close relationship between China and Australia have also motivated more Chinese-Australian children to learn the Chinese language. A Chinese teacher with 25 years Chinese language teaching experience in Australia indicated:

China in 1992 was under-developed. At that time when I just came to Australia, few people would like to learn the Chinese language. A bilingual primary school which had both English and Chinese subjects attributed its small amount of the enrolment to the Chinese subject. The Chinese language was despised at that time. In contrast, recently, not only children with Chinese origin but also some children from non-Chinese background come to the bilingual project to learn the Chinese language, which has proven that China's new international standing stimulates children to learn the Chinese language. (Interviewee 58, 55; F; 21 June 2017)

This indicates that how China develops in the future will affect Chinese-Australian children's motivation to learn the Chinese language.

### **3.5 Summary**

This chapter has discussed how the decision to learn and use the Chinese language by school-aged Chinese Australians was made, and what motivated the children and adolescents to learn Chinese. This chapter also considered the complexity and dynamics in this process.

In the first section, this study elaborates how parents, peers and school-aged Chinese Australians themselves influence the decision to learn Chinese or not. Parents play a role as decision-makers, facilitators, tutors and creators of the language environment at children's different stages. In addition to parents, peers also have important influences on children's enthusiasm in learning the Chinese language. As they grow up and develop their cognition, their behaviour in learning the Chinese language shows a polarised trend.

According to the analysis of data, the second section then provides a hierarchical structure of multiple motivational factors that encourage the children to learn and to use the Chinese language, and analyses the three types of motives: conformity to community practices, instrumental motives and culture-oriented motives. This hierarchical structure of motives helps identify why Chinese immigrants with different levels of understanding of the changing society have varied motives in learning the Chinese language.

With the examination of the decision-making process and the hierarchical structure of motivations, this study also suggests that children and adolescents are not always driven by one motivation. Rather, it is common that they have multiple motivations and it is a dynamic process with the ever-changing environment.

## **Chapter 4 In-between Chinese and English: Chinese Language Learning Process**

After clarifying the issue of why Chinese-Australian children are sent and motivated to learn the Chinese language, this research then explores their learning process. The learning process of the Chinese language here not only refers to the formal schooling of the Chinese language in community school, but also includes the acquisition of the Chinese language during daily communication outside school hours. Not only have these children's language skills been developed through the language learning and acquisition, but also they have experienced culturalisation in parallel sets of cultural environment during this process. Applying the 'dual-track culturalisation' theoretical framework, this chapter aims to provide a social-cultural analysis of Chinese-Australian children's learning process of the Chinese language as well as characteristics emerged during this process.

### **4.1 Introduction**

Literature to date has provided some descriptions and discussions about how Chinese immigrant children learn the Chinese language, which offers some preliminary ideas on the process. Nevertheless, most of them were unsuitable to discuss the learning process in this context considering the particularities of Chinese immigrants in Australia or failed to provide an analysis to discuss this issue from socio-cultural perspective. Specifically, research gaps could be summarised as follows:

First, an overwhelming majority of existing literature considered this issue from educational and pedagogical perspectives, which indeed shed light on the understanding of the Chinese complementary schooling in the worldwide, such as US (Chen et al., 2010; Kondo-Brown & Brown, 2008; Peyton, Ranard, & McGinnis, 2001; Zhou & Li, 2003), Malaysia (Ee, 1997;

Kua, 2014; Lee, 2011; Wang, 2014), Japan (Maher, 2015), Indonesia (Suryadinata, 1972; Zong & Liu, 2007), Singapore (Tan, 2006), Australia (Lo Bianco & Liu, 2007; Chen & Zhang, 2014; Orton, 2010; Smith, 1993), Scotland (Hancock, 2014), Netherlands (Li & Juffermans, 2014, 2015). However, the learning process should not be limited to the school-based sphere. Learning Chinese language in causal forms, such as parenting's tutoring during after-school time, learning with private tutors and peers, and acquisition through daily communication and cultural immersion, is also an important additional contributor, which could not be neglected.

Second, some of these studies were outdated and not applicable in the context of Australia. Many accuse the Chinese community school of having old-fashioned teaching methods, insufficient educational resources and unqualified teachers, such as what happened in UK (Archer, Francis, & Mau, 2009) and in the US (M. Li, 2005). However, this kind of situation is not applicable in the current Chinese complementary schooling in Australia anymore. In Australia, large-scale Chinese community schools are financially supported by the state government and therefore they can use venues and teaching resources of local day schools, which guarantees that the Chinese community schooling share similar educational resources to that of day schooling. The recent increasing number of Chinese migrants who have achieved significant educational achievement also leads to well-educated background of teachers in Chinese school. Take Xin Jinshan School as example, Interviewee 24 (50; M; 13 May 2017), a school manager, indicated that 90% of teachers in this Chinese school received tertiary education, with 54% bachelor's degree, 33% master's degree and 3% doctoral degree. Therefore, some of studies are outdated in discussing this issue.

Third, some studies explored the heritage language acquisition from an emergentist perspective. They argued that properties of learning a heritage language often emerged in

surprising ways rather than a dedicated and systematic approaches (MacWhinney, 2001; Ellis, 1998; O’Grady, 2005, 2008). A study conducted by Korean scholars proposes that ‘language emerges from interaction of a myriad of non-grammatical factors—ranging from processing and working memory, to perception and physiology, to general conceptual capacities and social interaction’ (O’Grady, Kwak, Lee, & Lee, 2011, p. 224). However, based on the large body of data collected from the fieldwork, the learning process of the Chinese language by Chinese-Australian children are characterised by both continuity and non-continuity. The continuity of the language learning is reflected in the increasing vocabularies and sustained learning of the set of grammatical structures and principles, which is analysed in detail in Section 4.3.

Last but not the least, having reviewed the literature carefully and thoroughly, this study also identifies that there is little discussion about this issue from a socio-cultural perspective. The existing literature provided some cases and analyses about the educational status, pedagogical techniques and learning behaviours. However, they failed to situate the Chinese migrant children into the special dual-cultural environment that they are immersed into. Without considering this, the previous discussion lacked the insight to analyse and discuss special characteristics and the dynamic process of their Chinese language learning, as well as the negotiation between the mainstream language and the Chinese language in the dual-track culturalisation process.

Applying the dual-track culturalisation theoretical framework, this chapter looks at the children and adolescents’ Chinese language learning process and analyses their language learning and using in-between the Chinese language and the English language. This chapter is organised in three sections: (1) The negotiation between the mainstream language and the Chinese language. Before coming to the conclusion that they finally learn and use both the

languages, this section firsts deals with the simultaneously happened learning process of both the Chinese and the English and then analyses the change of their language preference during this process. (2) Continuity and non-continuity of Chinese language learning. As a part of the systematic analysis of the dual-track language learning process, the second section analyses two very important opposed characteristics of their Chinese language learning. (3) An analysis from linguistic and pedagogical perspectives is offered by the third section. This section contextualises the Chinese migrant children's Chinese language learning behaviours with some linguistic theories and suggests how to learn well the Chinese language in a bilingual environment.

## **4.2 Chinese-Australian children's language preference**

Different from children and adolescents growing up in a mono-language environment, Chinese-Australian children and adolescents who live in the two sets of cultural environment always experience the dual-track language learning and the change of language preference. This section first looks at the development of both the Chinese language and the English language, as well as the characteristics emerged during the dual-track learning process, followed by an analysis of the change of their language preference from the Chinese language to the English language. This section then looks at the final stage of their language learning and draw a conclusion that they learn both the Chinese language and the English language after the change of language preference.

An important point to emphasise here is that language learning by school-aged Chinese Australians is not limited to the formal schooling in both day school and complementary school, it also includes the casual conversation with family members at home and communications with peers. In contract to the conscious learning of a certain language, the latter is called the 'language acquisition' which is used to describe a natural, intuitive and

subconscious process of the way to develop competence in a language. As the American linguist Stephen Krashen (1982), in *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition*, writes:

Language acquisition is a subconscious process; language acquirers are not usually aware of the fact that they are acquiring language, but are only aware of the fact that they are using the language for communication. We are generally not consciously aware of the rules of the languages we have acquired. Instead, we have a “feel” for correctness. Grammatical sentences sound right, or feel right, and errors feel wrong, even if we do not consciously know what rule was violated. Other ways of describing acquisition include implicit learning, informal learning, and natural learning. In non-technical language, acquisition is “picking-up” a language. (Krashen, 1982, p.10)

In this research, language learning and language acquisition are two collateral ways that through which the children and adolescents develop their language skills and competences simultaneously. Children learn Chinese and English languages through the formal schooling in complementary school and day school respectively. They learn Chinese and English in a systematic way to know the explicit knowledge of a language and how to use them.

Meanwhile, they learn the Chinese language and the English language through the dual-track socialising process unconsciously. Studies to date analysed the language learning acquisition from different approaches, such as cognitive developmental approach (Piaget, 1953, 1955), the ‘competition model’ from an information processing approach (Bates & MacWhinney, 1989) and the ‘constructivism’ from social-historical perspective (Piaget, 1971; Lave & Wenger, 1991), which provide this research with some theoretical base and implications. This section takes both formal schooling and causal acquisition into consideration to discuss the learning process of the Chinese language by school-aged Chinese Australians.

#### 4.2.1 The development of both the Chinese language and the English language

According to interviews and observations, for most Chinese-Australian children and adolescents, they learn and develop both the Chinese language and the English language skills from their preoperational stage<sup>9</sup>. They receive the English language schooling in day school and the Chinese language schooling in Chinese community school. Meanwhile, they acquire the English language and the Chinese language subconsciously during the daily socialisation. During this dual-track learning process, there are three characteristics to be discussed as follows.

First, the development of the Chinese language skills and the English language skills start at different times. Chinese language developing usually starts at an earlier stage while the English language develops after schooling begins. This is because both second-generation immigrant children and 1.75 generation immigrant children spend almost all of their pre-schooling time with their family members, for whom the Chinese language is the most convenient and comfortable language that they use to communicate. Children are immersed in the Chinese language speaking environment before they start to socialise with peers speaking the English language, which makes the Chinese language their first language before they start schooling.

Also, the Chinese complementary schooling at Chinese language community school usually starts one year earlier than the schooling at day school, which means children receive the Chinese schooling earlier than the English schooling. It usually happens that Chinese parents send their three-year-children to the kindergarten class or choose to take them to the prep class when they are four-year-old.

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<sup>9</sup> The preoperational stage was defined as the second cognitive development stage by Jean Piaget in 1970 (Piaget, 1970).

In contrast, the children begin the formal schooling at day school at the same time with other children. They usually start the Year 1 at six years old. Specifically, Australian-born Chinese children start schooling at about six years of age. 1.75 generation immigrant children migrated to Australia their early childhood and also attend the primary school during the similar period. It is also from this time that they start to learn the English language in class; meanwhile they acquire and practice the English language subconsciously during the social interaction with their peers.

Therefore, because of the earlier beginning time and more immersion, the Chinese language tends to become children’s first language before they attend the primary school. We could get Figure 4.1 shows the general age-grade correspondence of age, grade in Chinese complementary school and grade in day school.

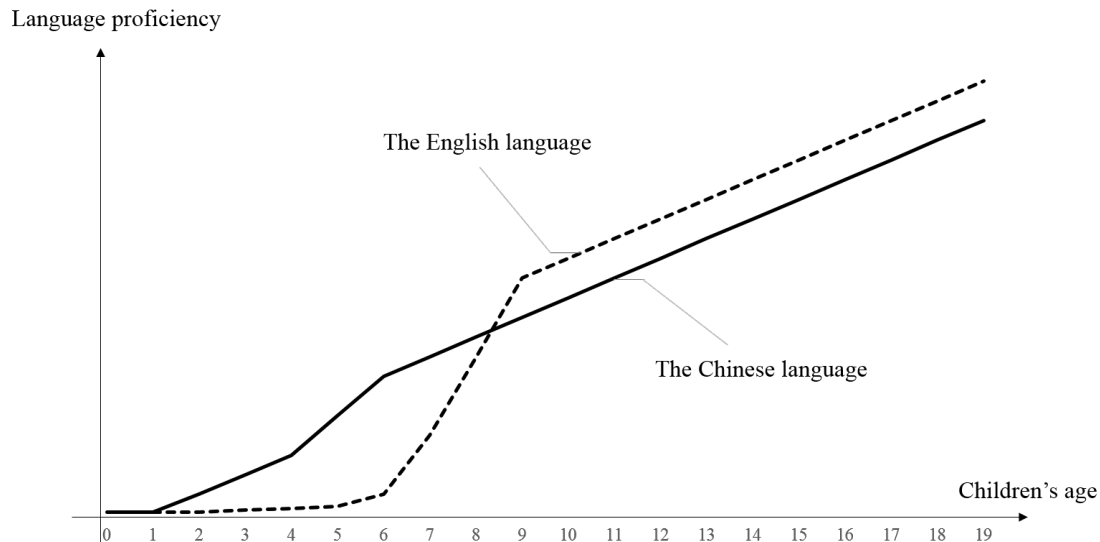
Children’s age	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Grade in Chinese community school	Kindergarten	Prep	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12		
Grade in day school		Kindergarten	Prep	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	College

**Figure 4.1 Age-grade Correspondence**

*Source: Compiled by the researcher based on the fieldwork conducted in multiple schools.*

Second, the development speeds for the Chinese language and the English language are different. Though the children’s development of the English language is later than that of the Chinese language, it increases more rapidly and comprehensively. The level of their English language usually exceeds that of their Chinese language, and the English language thus becomes their native language one to two years after the schooling in day school begins. In contrast, due to the less time commitment made in learning the Chinese language and increasing interaction with English-speaking peers, their Chinese language develops flatly but

stably. After stepping into primary school one to two years later, children's Chinese language and English language develop simultaneously despite the different speeds. Figure 4.2 demonstrates the general developing trends of both language skills.



**Figure 4.2 The general trends of the developments of Chinese and English**

*Source: Proposed by the researcher based on the fieldwork conducted in multiple schools.*

Third, the children who quit learning the Chinese language in Chinese complementary schooling do not necessarily quit the acquisition of the Chinese language. Though research objectives in this research mainly refer to the children who learn the Chinese language and the data was mainly obtained from the class observations and interviews conducted in the Chinese language school, the children who do not come to the Chinese community school could not be ignored.

Through snowball sampling, I also conducted interviews with parents whose children give up learning Chinese language in complementary school. According to the data obtained from interviews, this type of children also acquire Chinese language in casual method. This is because they inevitably speak the Chinese language with their family members at home. Even

for those who are reluctant to learn and speak the Chinese language, simply being immersed into a Chinese speaking environment at home could also be regarded as a kind of Chinese language acquisition as their listening skills will be developed subconsciously in this process. Therefore, for both the children attending the Chinese language school to receive the Chinese schooling and the ones who quit the formal Chinese schooling, the Chinese language is learnt and acquired consciously or subconsciously, with the English language being developed simultaneously in the other track.

#### **4.2.2 The change of language preference from Chinese to English**

After analysing the general developing trends of both the Chinese language and the English language skills of the children observed, this part discusses another interesting and unique language learning phenomenon which only happens in the language learning process of migrants whose heritage language and mainstream language in the host country are different. This phenomenon is that this type of migrants always experiences the change of language preference from the heritage language to the mainstream language. As several Korean scholars (O'Grady et al., 2011) summarise in their recent research:

Common in immigrant communities, this type of language acquisition is characterised by normal exposure to the parental language in the first few years of life, followed by an abrupt shift to the majority language when formal schooling begins. (O'Grady et al., 2011, p. 223)

Base on the data collected from the fieldwork, this research suggests that this phenomenon is also prominent in second generation and 1.75 generation Chinese immigrant children in Australia. They first develop their Chinese language skills and then change their language preference to the English language when they begin to attend the primary school and to socialise with their peers.

Interviewee 10 (38; F; 18 March 2017) whose son was six years old and just migrated to Australia one year ago, expressed her deep worries about the English ability of her son. By the time of interview, her son is a native speaker of the Chinese language, and he could speak the Chinese language as fluently as the other Chinese children growing up in China; while, it is a little difficult for him to catch up with the English content delivered in the day school. However, Interviewee 10 might be able to get some consolation from other parents' experience. Another parent whose daughter who shared the similar experience with Interviewee 10's son indicated:

Before attending the Prep class, my daughter knew little English. Attending the Prep class increases the frequency of her listening and speaking the English language.

Therefore, my daughter's language preference changed rapidly from the Chinese language to the English language after day schooling starts. (Interviewee 16, 36; M; 25 March 2017)

#### **4.2.2.1 The reasons behind the change of language preference**

Both interviews and observations have also revealed that the shift of language preference is mainly due to the change of language environment. As the Figure 4.2 shows, this change usually occurs in one to two years after Chinese-Australian children attend the Prep class or Year 1 when they begin schooling conducted in English. This is because attending local school increases children's exposure to the English language environment and accordingly decreases their time committed in learning the Chinese language.

Specifically, before attending the primary school, children spend almost every day with their family members, especially the senior family members who could not speak the English language. This provides them with a Chinese language environment as same as that the Chinese children in China could have. However, after attending day school, they only have

after-school time and weekends to spend with their Chinese-speaking family members and probably Chinese peers. This undoubtedly decreases the time that children exposed to the Chinese language environment in which they could acquire the Chinese language subconsciously.

Interviewee 98 (35; F; 16 September 2017) whose daughter just finished the Year 4 said that her husband and she would like to help their child stick to the Chinese language at home. However, they give up the idea when they find out they have little time left in teaching after taking their daughter back home, having dinner and finishing washing. As a result, their child chooses to speak whatever she would like to speak. It is common for Chinese families in Australia to face this situation, which leads to the decrease of the developing speed of their Chinese language skills.

In contrast, the children begin their schooling in day school which is conducted in English and then they develop their English skills rapidly. During their daytime in day school, they learn English in class, they are delivered the knowledge in English, and they communicate with their peers in the English language during class breaks. All the conscious communication in and subconscious acquisition of the English language make them immersed into an English language environment and seize their time and effort from the Chinese language learning and acquisition. Figure 4.3 illustrates a general picture of the

children's change of language environment from attending day school.

	Before schooling		After schooling	
	Weekdays	Weekends	Weekdays	Weekends
School time 7:00-16:00				
After-school time 16:00-21:00				

The Chinese language  
 The English language

**Figure 4.3 Time commitment in the acquisition of Chinese and English languages**

*Source: Developed by the researcher based on the fieldwork conducted in multiple schools.*

#### 4.2.2.2 Characteristics of the change of language preference

According to the fieldwork, the change of language preference is characterised as commonality, selectivity and non-reversibility. The first characteristic is the universality of this change. Almost all second-generation Chinese children and 1.75 generation children experience the change of language preference. Australian-born Chinese children are nurtured by their Chinese-speaking parents and grandparents, and spend almost all of their childhood time with their family members and Chinese peers who have the same language environment with them. This makes Chinese language mother language before they begin the schooling in English. 1.75 generation who migrated to Australia during their early childhood grow up in China or other Chinese speaking areas, which undoubtedly makes the Chinese language their

first and only language to communicate with. Both Australian-born Chinese children and 1.75 generation and socialise with English-speaking peers due to the reasons we just discussed.

Second, though this change happens during the growing-up of 1.75 and second generations immigrant children, it rarely happens in the language learning process of 1.25 generation migration, which indicates the selectivity. Chinese children who migrate to Australia in their adolescent years share more similar experiences, including the cultural background and language environment, with non-migrants rather than 1.75 and 2nd generation. This group of youngsters have their own dilemma of language learning. They fail to have the similar level of the mastery of the Chinese language because they miss the important periods, the preoperational stage and concrete operational stage (Piaget, 1970) for their cognition and language skills development. Neither could they be able to speak the English language as natively and fluently as their 1.75 and second generations counterparts. As a result, they could speak two languages while they are proficient in neither of them.

Non-reversibility is the third feature of the change of language preference. Once children experience the change, it is almost impossible for them to reverse their language preference. Neither would they like to do so. As Figure 4.2 shows, after the language change happens, the English language is developed in high speed which greatly surpasses the developing speed of the Chinese language. Chinese-Australian children would eventually take the English language as their first preferred language to communicate and the Chinese language as their heritage language to maintain.

#### **4.2.2.3 The relationship between language and cognition**

Based on the analysis of interviews and observations, the change of language environment and the consequent change of language preference result in some Chinese-Australian children's reluctance for the Chinese language learning. This directs our attention to the

discussion about the relationship between language and cognition. Since 1960s, a group of linguists and psychologists explored the theories of the language-cognition relationship in different academic domains, such as connectionism (Elman et al., 1996), cognitive linguistics (Lakoff, 1970, 1971, & 1990), the cognitive neuroscience movement (Miller & Gazzaniga, 1984). Among all the research results, the commonalities between language and cognition analysed and emphasised by Jean Piaget have some implications to the reluctance of Chinese language acquisition for this research project.

According to observations and interviews, children may feel reluctant and embarrassed to express in and use the language if the language abilities could not come up with the development of cognition. The incongruity between language abilities and cognition not only leads to the decreased learning and using of the Chinese language, but also impulses the change of language preference. The learning of the English language and other subjects may squeeze the time spent on learning the Chinese language, which surely influences the acquisition and development of the Chinese language. However, children's cognitive development would not be stopped or postponed because of the slow development of the Chinese language.

Therefore, there will be a gap between language and cognition. Once they feel difficult to express their mind accurately with the vocabularies and grammatical structures they possess, there is a high likelihood that they give up learning or make less time commitment in learning the Chinese language. In return, once their interest in learning the Chinese language decreases due to the difficulty to express aforementioned, the gap between the language and cognition increases.

This phenomenon occurs prominently in the Year 4 to Year 6 when most the children complete the change of language preference. Children in this period have known a lot about

this society and they have their own understanding about the things happening around.

However, the content in the textbook keeps in a very simple level which is easy to understand. As a teacher of Year 5 described about her class:

This lesson is about an ancient Chinese story, *sīmǎguāng zágāng*, which might be delivered in the Year 1 or 2 class in China. The content is easy to understand for students in my class, while the vocabulary and sentences are new to them, which intensifies the gap between their language abilities and their cognition. In this case, it is common that some children become uninterested in learning the Chinese language.

(interviewee 88, 45; F; 2 September)

Some children loss their interest in learning the Chinese language not because of the Chinese language itself, but because of the incongruity between language and cognition. Language is the processing and creating process of information that enable people to understand and communicate with each other. Therefore, once the language is unable to satisfy this demand, children tend to learn and develop another language, which is the English language in this case.

#### **4.2.3 Negotiation among the mainstream language, the Chinese language and the other languages**

We have already discussed the dual track learning process of both the Chinese language and the English language, followed by the change of preference of language learning and using after one to two years schooling. This section analyses the final pattern of Chinese-Australian children's language learning, which has been observed at the fieldwork sites. Specifically, this part looks at the three characteristics of the final stage of the learning process in the school period.

First, the English language serves as the first language for most of the Chinese-Australian children for the post-language preference-change period, with the Chinese language as heritage language and one or more other languages as complements. Based on the class observation conducted from Year 4, this research finds that most children speak the Chinese language with teacher in class, while speak the English language during the class break, which means that speaking the English language is more comfortable than speaking the Chinese language for them. Though the Chinese language and the English language both are developed during the schooling time, the language they use subconsciously appears to be the English language which is the mainstream language in Australia.

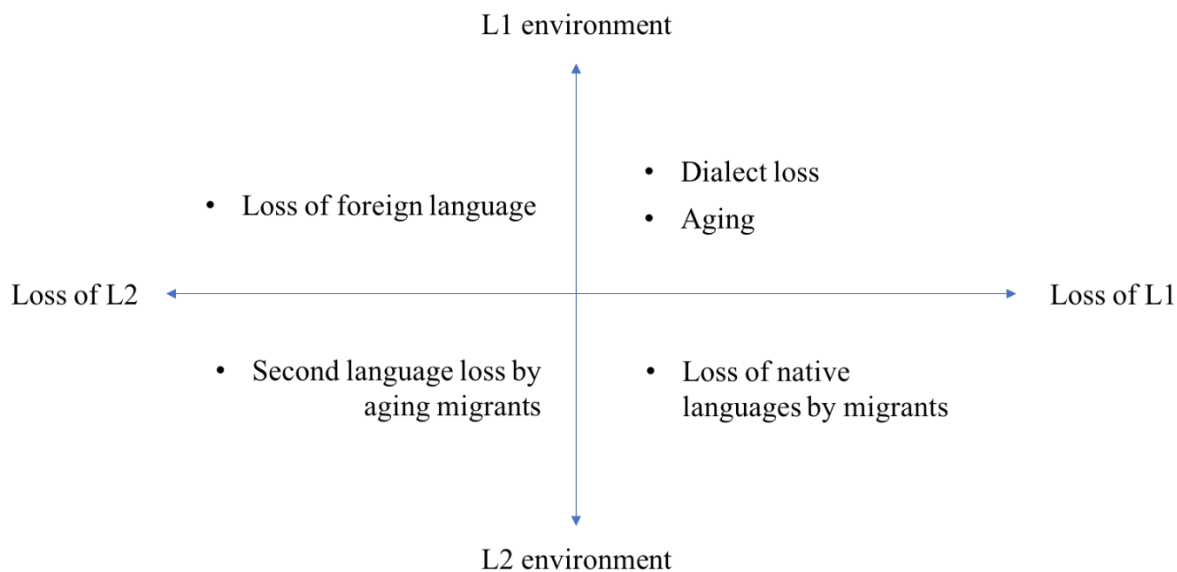
With regards to other languages, some children learn a third language during the primary schooling. The program of learning other languages is called LOTE<sup>10</sup> (Language Other Than English). They usually learn LOTE two to three hours per week and LOTE includes but not limited to Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Italian, French, etc. depending on courses offered by the primary school they attend. For children who learn the Chinese language as a second language in day school, they usually have more time commitment in learning the Chinese language. However, the content delivered in the day school is always too easy for them and they usually attend the complementary schools at weekends. For children who choose to learn the third language, most of them quit learning the third language after they attend the secondary school because the secondary school may not provide the language course they used to study. It is difficult for them to either continue the learning of the third language they have learnt in primary school or start learning a new language. Only a few of them insist in learning the third language and developing the trilingual ability.

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<sup>10</sup> In Victoria, Australia, LOTE subject is required in every primary school.

Second, the rapid-developing abilities of the English language does not necessarily lead to the Chinese language attrition. The existing literature explore the correlation between first language (hereafter L1) attainment and second language (hereafter L2) proficiency in early bilinguals (Olshtain, 1989; Bylund, Abrahamsson, & Hyltenstam, 2012). Some of them regard that L1 maintenance hamper the nativelikeness of L2 while some suppose that it does not impede the learning of L2. Though L2 and heritage language are definitely two different target languages, these existing studies discussing the correlation between L1 learning and L2 learning provided implications to the Chinese heritage language learning in this research.

Dated back to 1986, Van Els provided an interesting classification of language attrition as Figure 4.4 shows. In this classification, loss of L1 in a second language environment usually refers to the loss of the parental language by immigrants (Van Els, 1986). However, in case of the Chinese-Australian children, because of the multiple reasons and motivations discussed in the Chapter 3, this loss rarely happens in the process of their bilingual learning. The Chinese language means more than a heritage language to maintain negatively; rather, it serves as more fundamental and cultural functions that stimulate the children and adolescents to learn and to use it. In their language learning process, both the English language and the Chinese language develop with different speeds, even after the change of their language preference.



**Figure 4.4 Van Els's classification of language attrition**

*Source: Refined by the researcher based on Van Els (1986)'s classification.*

Third, the children and adolescents continue their dual-track learning of both the languages and they would choose, consciously or subconsciously, to learn either of them according to different language settings and interlocutors. They learn Chinese language in complementary Chinese school and some of them learn Chinese in LOTE program in day school; they acquire the Chinese language knowledge subconsciously during their daily interaction with their Chinese-speaking family members. Meanwhile, they receive the formal English schooling in day school and acquire the English language via the socialisation process. Though formal schooling ends at some time while they grow up, the acquisition of both the language is continuous.

### **4.3 The non-continuity and the continuity of the Chinese language learning**

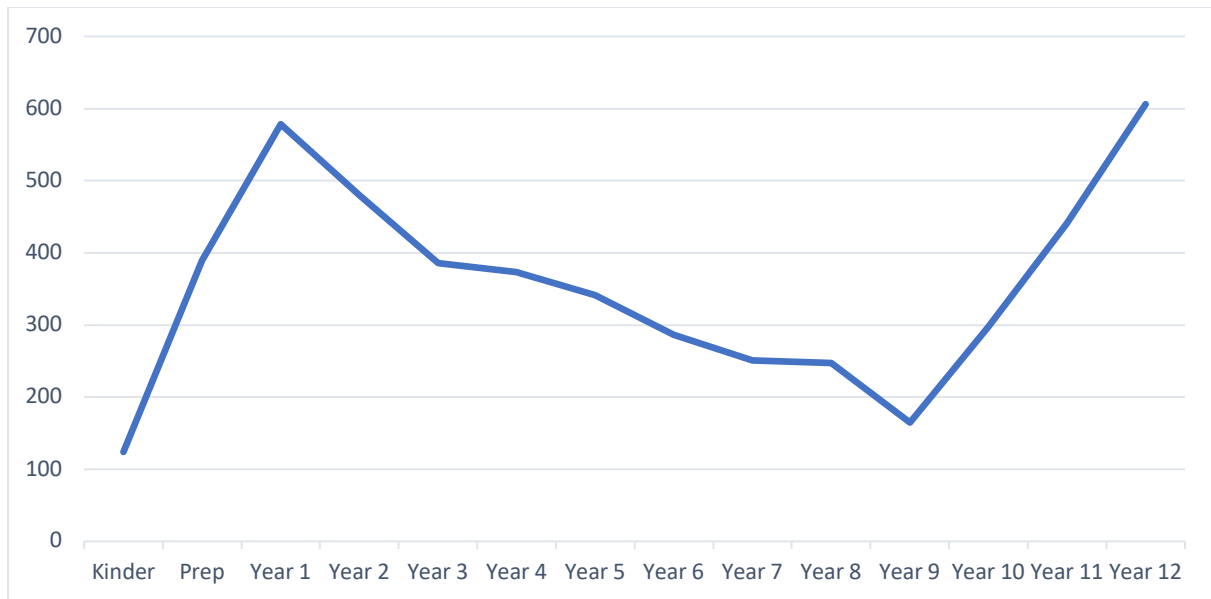
Language learning is considered and analysed as a continuous process by many previous studies (Ross, 2001; Sowa, 2006; Scarino & Liddicoat, 2009). From infants' babbling to

adults' harangue, language learning is a continuous and ongoing process of acquiring, acknowledging and building the system of pronunciation, vocabulary, grammatical rules, and syntactic structure. However, the language learning process is not always continuous. Sometimes, this process might be interrupted by external forces that suddenly happened, such as the change of environment, the end of certain language programs, or distraction caused by learning other things.

This section firstly discusses the non-continuity of the Chinese language learning process by school-aged Chinese Australians. This is a special feature which is formed by the special language environment and the educational policy in Australia. Followed is an analyse of the continuity of Chinese-Australian children's Chinese language learning. This explores that the continuity of the Chinese language learning exists in two groups of the children, including the children who insist in learning the Chinese language as well as the children giving up learning because of the VCE examination.

#### **4.3.1 The non-continuity of the Chinese language learning process**

As stated above, the process of language learning, sometimes, maybe interrupted by random external forces. For the children who receive the Chinese schooling in community school, the external force usually refers to the VCE. As Figure 4.5 indicates, the 2017 enrolment of Xin Jinshan Chinese School dropped from the beginning. Children in early schooling period give up the Chinese language learning because of the change of language preference and the consequent disinterest. Children in Year 4-6 quit the Chinese language learning mainly due to the incongruity of language and cognition as well as the increased time of staying alone. However, the lowest point of the enrolment trend happened in the children of Year 7-9, which is resulted from the high pressure imposed by the VCE examination.



**Figure 4.5 The 2017 Enrolment of Xin Jinshan Chinese Language and Culture School**

*Source: Compiled from fieldwork data.*

If children did not have to face the pressure from the VCE examination in the process of learning the Chinese language, even if some of them lost interest in learning the Chinese language, it may have taken longer for them to give up. It is possible that this group of children would have reduced the time commitment in the Chinese language learning rather than just stopped suddenly.

However, the pressure from the VCE makes it urgent for the children to make a decision—what subject to choose in the final examination. For those taking the Chinese language as one of the examination subjects, their Chinese language skills are boosted in the process of the three-year intensive learning, which is to be discussed in the following section. In contrast, the other group of students usually give up the formal schooling of the Chinese language and make their effort to learn the subjects they choose. Therefore, for some school-aged Chinese Australians, the learning process of the Chinese language is interrupted by the VCE.

A manager of the Xin Jinshan Chinese school, made the following comments:

I am in charge of the enrolment of the students in the beginning of every semester.

Children attending the Chinese school with a casual attitude tend to give up the Chinese language schooling no later than in Year 7 to Year 8. If they could not obtain a higher mark through the Chinese language exam, even with the bonus point, than the mark they obtain through the other subjects, why do they choose the Chinese language as a subject? It is the reality that some children even prefer to choose Physics, Chemistry or Advanced Mathematics. (Interviewee 80, 40; M; 26 August 2017)

This phenomenon is confirmed by Interviewee 72 (52; M; 19 August 2017), a Year 10 teacher. He said that Chinese students in his class all chose the Chinese language as one of the subjects in the forthcoming VCE examination. 'If students do not want to take the Chinese language exam, they would not come to learn the Chinese language in this period', Interviewee 72 expressed.

Therefore, for some Chinese-Australian students, the learning process of the Chinese language is normally interrupted by the pressure and the urgent need to make a choice among several subjects. Faced with the high pressure from the VCE study, students in this period tend to take the Chinese language as a subject which could bring the actual points in their final examination rather than a communication tool or a form of cultural attachment. Once the benefits brought by learning the Chinese language is not as visible as the benefits brought by learning the other subjects, their learning process of the Chinese language through formal schooling is probably ended.

#### **4.3.2 The continuity of the Chinese language learning process**

Though some children's Chinese language learning process is interrupted by external forces, such as the VCE stage, the continuity is more prominently throughout the whole language learning process. To make it clear, according to their Chinese language learning behaviours,

this part divides the Chinese heritage language (hereafter CHL) learners into two groups to better analyse the continuity of the Chinese language learning process. The first group of CHL learners are those who never give up the Chinese schooling from the beginning of schooling to the finish of the VCE. The second group of CHL learners are students suspending learning the Chinese language before the VCE preparation period while picking up the Chinese language learning after they finish the VCE examination.

#### **4.3.2.1 Persistent continuity**

The first group of children learn the Chinese language from their first bubbling till they finish the VCE examination; some of them even continue the Chinese language learning in the university. The continuity of language learning is embodied in the continuity of the improvement of the Chinese language knowledge from the linguistic perspective and the continuity of the positivity of the Chinese language learning behaviours from the psychological perspective.

Though most of the data in this research was collected in the year 2017 to 2018, through stepping into the classroom ranging from pre-schooling to Year 12, as well as interviewing some of them, we could obtain a broad picture of the continuous progress of Chinese-Australian students' Chinese language skills. The development of their Chinese language abilities is visible, from pronunciation, vocabulary, grammas, to the contextual use of the language. The following is an analytical discussion about the continuous process of the Chinese-Australian students.

Chinese-Australian children mostly begin the schooling from three years old by attending the Kindergarten class or four years old by attending the Prep class. The language learning in this period is more like a play date with Chinese peers. Teachers always design some interesting games and guide children to have fun as well as learn some simple Chinese characters in this

process, such as ‘apple (píngguǒ)’, ‘banana (xiāngjiāo)’, ‘spring (chūntiān)’, etc. In this period, listening and speaking are more important than reading and writing. It is also in this period that children begin to learn how to pronounce Chinese characters, and Pinyin<sup>11</sup> is usually present above the Chinese characters as a reminder for children of the pronunciation of the Chinese characters until Year 5. Children in this process are also expected to learn and to be familiar with the four tones of Mandarin which is a special characteristic differing from the English language.

The expanding of vocabulary is also a continuous learning process. ‘From an infant’s first word to an adult’s level of competence, language learning is a continuous process of building and refining the stock of words, families of words grouped by use in the same contexts, and patterns of connections among the words and families’ (Sowa, 2007, p.26). Children are always taught how to write the strokes which are the basic of Chinese characters, as well as some simple Chinese characters in Year 1.

This is followed by the learning of some words with the increasing difficulty and depth which are delivered from about Year 1 to Year 5. In Year 6, the learning of idioms is also added into children’s Chinese language learning. The following are some examples of idioms that children may learn in Year 6: yīxīn yīyì, yǎn`ěr dào líng, wángyáng bǔláo, bāmíáo zhùzhǎng, zhēnjīn búpà huǒliàn, etc. Children then learn some simple professional words which could help them start to understand the society. The building and expanding the stock of words are conducted and never finish in their following Chinese schooling through reading longer and deeper articles.

The learning of grammatical structures and clauses also begins early. In Year 2, some simple grammatical structures are delivered in class. For example, ‘Ba (bǎ) structure’ which could be

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<sup>11</sup> Pinyin is the official Romanization system for Standard Chinese in mainland China.

summarised as ‘Ba + something+ verb’ is a commonly used grammatical structure in this period. ‘Put on clothes’ with ‘Ba structure’ in Chinese should be ‘Ba clothes put on (bǎ yīfu chuānshàng)’. After several years of learning grammas and simple sentence making, children in Year 6 are taught how to make complex sentence with associated word. Despite the difference between the correspondence of the usage of associated word in English and Chinese, followed are some examples: ‘because.....so..... (yīnwéi..... suǒyǐ.....)’, ‘if....., ..... (rúguǒ..... jiù.....)’, ‘though....., but..... (suīrán..... dànshì.....)’, etc.

The above discussion about the continuous learning progress of pronunciation, vocabulary and grammatical structures are the input of a language. The learning of a language also includes what the language learners could output. In the case of CHL learners, their writing and speaking skills are also developed in this process. For example, they are required to write essays about 100 to 150 Chinese characters in Year 4, 200 to 250 characters in Year 6 and approximately 500 Chinese characters for the preparation of VCE. Regarding to the oral abilities, they have some short oral presentations from Year 8, around the topics like ‘famous sightseeing points’, ‘traditional festivals’, ‘favourite sports’, etc. Stepping into Year 10 which is the prep VCE year, they have speech competitions each year with the purpose to make preparation for the VCE oral exam. The progress of their writing and speaking skills is continuous.

The continuity of the learning process of the Chinese language is also embodied in this group of Chinese-Australian children’s positive attitude and involvement towards learning. As discussed before, children in intermediate years from Year 4 to Year 6 have a high likelihood to give up learning because of the increasing interactions with English-speaking peers and the increasing difficulty in writing the Chinese characters. As long as children go through this period, most of them tend to learn the Chinese language continuously and determinedly to

face the upcoming challenge and pressure from the VCE. They usually regard the Chinese language learning as a serious mission which could bring them with bonus points in the final exam. In return, their serious attitude and commitment in the Chinese language learning also leads to the significant development of their Chinese language skills. It is always the case that the VCE impulses the development of Chinese-Australian students' Chinese language skills to bring them with the mastery of the Chinese language.

#### **4.3.2.2 Continuity through re-learning**

The children who give up learning the Chinese language while opting to re-learn it after the VCE exam also complete the continuity of the Chinese language learning. This is an interesting finding from the data collected in the Xin Jinshan School and the intermediate-level Chinese class of university.

This group of children suspend the Chinese language learning before stepping into higher grades, usually in Year 4 to Year 6. Without the pressure from the VCE exam after they finish the exam, some of them consider picking up the Chinese language learning in university. However, in spite of causal acquisition of the Chinese language through communication with family members, the Chinese skills of most of them stay in that level, especially in terms of the formal usage. This makes them re-learn the Chinese language from where they give up.

What makes me draw to this conclusion is that the grammatical structures delivered in Year 4 in Chinese complementary school are similar with the content delivered in the intermediate-level Chinese subject in the university. This section takes children in Year 4 as Group 1 and Chinese-Australian students enrolled in the intermediate-level Chinese subject as Group. According to interview with a Chinese tutor in the university (Interviewee 94, 27; F; 13 September 2017), three empirical examples are listed as followings to support the argument.

- 1) Both Group 1 and Group 2 do not know how to use approximate numbers. In the Chinese language, two adjacent numerals are used consecutively to express approximate numbers, such as ‘thirteen or fourteen (shísānsì gè)’, or ‘seven or eight hundred people (qībābǎi rén)’.
- 2) They both always feel difficult to distinguish ‘de (的)’, ‘de (地)’, ‘de (得)’<sup>12</sup>, three important but similar particles in the Chinese language.
- 3) The conjunctions that both groups of students learn to make complex sentence are quite similar, such as ‘一边……一边…… (yībiān…… yībiān……)’, or ‘又……又……(yòu…… yòu……)’.

In conclusion, the continuity and the non-continuity exist simultaneously in school-aged Chinese Australians’ learning process of the Chinese language. Generally speaking, learning of the Chinese language is continuous with the determined attitude, persevering effort, and the continuous progress; however, for some Chinese language learners, this process might be interrupted by external force like the VCE study and exam.

#### **4.4 An analysis from linguistic and pedagogical perspectives**

Based on the analysis above, the change of language preference and the characteristics of continuity and non-continuity are two special features emerged in the children and adolescents’ Chinese language learning process. These features emerged due to their response to the continuously changing dual-track cultural environment as well as the consequent changing language environment. Therefore, the above two sections are more like analyses from socio-cultural perspective, discussing the dynamics of their learning process of the

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<sup>12</sup> When spoken, ‘de (的)’, ‘de (地)’, ‘de (得)’ all sounds the same, but in Chinese writing, they are used after noun, verb and adjective, respectively.

Chinese language. The following section is a discussion from linguistic and pedagogical perspectives, with the purpose to identify the features and problems that they may have in learning the Chinese language.

#### **4.4.1 Linguistic distance and language transfer**

According to fieldwork, the children were found to be influenced by language transfer when they learn the Chinese language. Studies of migrants' negotiation between languages of country of origin and host country indicated that the process of learning and maintaining both the heritage language and mainstream language differs significantly, such as in USA (Chiswick & Miller, 2005), Australia (Chiswick & Miller, 1996), UK (Dustmann & Fabbri, 2003). This is because the extents to which one language differ from another, which is linguistic distance, are different. Because of the linguistic distance and the learning inertia, language learners usually apply their knowledge about one language to another, which is called 'language transfer'.

Based on the empirical data obtained from fieldwork, this study indicates that linguistic distance also influences Chinese-Australian children and adolescents' Chinese language learning process. This part is concerned with the issue of linguistic distance as well as the consequent language transfer, discussing how linguistic distance and language transfer exert influences on their language learning and what the special characteristics emerge in the process of their language transfer.

##### **4.4.1.1 Linguistic distance**

Linguistic distance is defined to describe the extent of differences between different languages. 'It seems to place languages along a continuum based on formal characteristics such as the number of cognates in languages or sets of shared syntactic characteristics' (de Bot, 1992, p. 9). Despite that some linguists and educationists proposed that the notion of

'linguistic distance' remains problematic (de Bot, 2000), it still has some implications in analysing the cross-linguistic influence on the Chinese language learning by school-aged Chinese Australians.

Though efforts were made to measure the linguistic distance (Chiswick & Miller, 2005), it is the fact that languages are complex and differ in pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, written form, syntax and myriad other aspects, which makes it difficult to measure the exact distance of languages. Taking the linguistic distance between the Chinese language with the other languages as example, even if we intuitively believe that Chinese is closer to Japanese than it is to English, by how much is it closer?

However, what is certain is that from qualitative perspective, the differences between the Chinese language and the English language indeed exists, and their differences in pronunciation, vocabulary, grammatical structures, and writing forms influence their Chinese language significantly.

#### **4.4.1.2 Language transfer**

According to the analysis of empirical data and considering the existence of 'linguistic distance' and special characteristics of the children's Chinese language learning, this part analyses how children's English language knowledge influences their Chinese language learning. Due to the existence of linguistic distance, it usually happens that language learners apply their understanding about and the established using habits of a language to another. This is language transfer which is characterised as 'a redistribution of already available structures, driven by lexical and conceptual properties' (Moro & Suchtelen, 2017, p. 143). When both languages share the similar pronunciation or structure, linguistic interference could lead to the positive transfer which could accelerate the target language learning. On the contrary, negative language transfer will occur when the linguistic distance is long.

Specifically, children's English skills influence their Chinese language learning from the following aspects.

First, the children and adolescents are influenced negatively by language transfer when they learn the Chinese language due to many grammatical differences of Chinese and English languages. In English, much information is delivered by using auxiliaries and verb inflections are basic and essential; Chinese, however, information is conveyed by word order or contextual understanding. It is not surprising that when children make Chinese sentence, they, sometimes, have trouble with the word order as they may apply the knowledge they know about the English language. For example:

In Chinese order: xiàgèyuè wǒ yàoqù fǎguó

Next month I will go to France.

In English order: wǒ yàoqù fǎguó xiàgèyuè

I will go to France next month.

Second, writing systems of the Chinese language and the English language are radically different. 'Languages of the Asia-Pacific region, such as Chinese, are based on ideographic writing systems which are radically different from the alphabetic systems used in Western languages, such as English' (Schimitt, Pan, & Tavassoli, 1994, p. 419). Compared with the phonogram which is easy to remember and to write, ideogram is used to represent words or morphemes. It is difficult for Chinese language learners to remember the writing of Chinese characters and the combination of strokes if they lack the basic Chinese knowledge and do not understand the origin of Chinese characters.

As discussed in the last chapter, to learn Chinese characters writing is a challenge for Chinese-Australian children. The intensive delivery of Chinese character writing from Year 2 makes some children begin to show signs to dislike the Chinese language learning. To take the advantage of positive language transfer, Pinyin is applied in the Chinese language teaching from the beginning period of Chinese learning. Because of the similarities between Pinyin and English writing system, the textbooks of up to Year 5 are designed with Pinyin above each line of Chinese characters to help learners understand the content of texts and thus maintain the learning of the Chinese language. However, Pinyin teaching is a ‘double-edged sword’. Some children overly depend on Pinyin and selectively ignore Chinese characters, which might lead to children’s incompetence in Chinese character recognition and writing.

Third, the third point is an interesting phenomenon that differs with the commonly happened negative language transfer. That is neither negative nor positive language transfer happens on Chinese-Australian children’s learning of the pronunciation of the Chinese language. The pronunciation of the Chinese language is difficult for most Chinese language learners since Mandarin Chinese is a tonal language. To differentiate meaning, the same syllable could be pronounced with different four tones. This is a special feature of the Mandarin Chinese that does not exist in the English language, so it is difficult for Chinese language learners without Chinese background to pronounce correctly.

However, second generation and 1.75 generation immigrant Chinese children could pronounce the Chinese language, to some extent, as correctly as the native Chinese speakers could. This is because that they live in the Chinese-language speaking environment earlier than in the English-speaking environment, which makes them more familiar with pronunciation and intonation of the Chinese language than the English language in their early

childhood. Before attending primary school, they are able to pronounce the four tones of a certain syllable according to Pinyin through the causal acquisition of the Chinese language in daily communication with family members. In contrast, since there is no tone in the English language, it is difficult for Chinese language learners whose language environment is only English pronounce the pitch accurately.

Contrary with pronunciation learning and acquisition of the Chinese language and the English language start at different periods, the grammar learning of both language start at almost same period. The English language with more acquisition and practices in the following schooling years becomes their preferable language, which makes it possible that children might apply their knowledge about the English language to their Chinese language learning. Therefore, the learning of pronunciation is seldom affected by negative language transfer as the learning of vocabulary and grammar is.

#### **4.4.2 Unbalanced ability in Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing**

Language skills, listening, speaking, reading and writing do not develop simultaneously. Though the skill in one aspect may facilitate the learning of the other, it is not necessarily converted to the development of the other. The findings in this research suggest that different cultural, social-economic and family educational backgrounds contribute to different levels of language abilities of Chinese-Australian children and different patterns of language skill development. Children of new Chinese migrant family background can be divided into three groups to facilitate the discussion in this section. The first group of children are who have the Mandarin Chinese speaking environment at home, the second group of children who speak the Chinese dialects at home, and the last group of children who have Chinese ethnicity but do not have Chinese-speaking environment at home.

The first group of the children who have the Mandarin Chinese speaking environment at home have better listening and speaking skills better than their writing skills, with their reading skills at a general level. This is firstly because of their unbalanced focuses on four aspects of the Chinese language skills and secondly because of the little influence of language negative transfer on the listening and speaking skills development.

First, different children's time and efforts on four aspects of language skills are different. Evidence from the research about information-processing and language comprehension indicate that cultural background knowledge could facilitate language learning (Xiao, 2006). Children who grow up in an environment where Mandarin Chinese is the main communicative language have more opportunities to acquire the standard Chinese language, especially on the aspects of listening and speaking. Through daily communication with their family members, especially the senior members who could not speak the English language, they develop their listening and oral ability. Even for the children who are reluctant to speak the Chinese language, being immersed in an environment with Chinese cultural symbols could also enhance their Chinese ability subconsciously. For example, children's listening ability is enhanced subconsciously through watching Chinese TV programs played as background during the family's relaxation time.

However, in contrast, the reading and writing abilities could not be easily developed through the subconscious behaviours. This means that their exposure to the Chinese speaking environment does not necessarily lead them to acquire equivalent writing and reading skills with listening and speaking skills. These two aspects of ability, especially the writing ability, must be enhanced through conscious and continuous effort and practice.

The second reason is that their listening and speaking abilities are seldom influenced by the language negative transfer. This is because that they have already had the basic understanding

and knowledge about the pronunciation of the Chinese language before attending the primary school, while they usually have not started to learn to write Chinese characters in this period. Therefore, the oral ability is not influenced by the language negative transfer as the writing ability is. The data collected from the fieldwork provides empirical support to this result. From the seven effective responses obtained from the interviews with children ranging from Year 2 to Year 11 who have the Mandarin Chinese speaking environment at home, all of them believe that writing Chinese is the most difficult part in their Chinese learning process. Interviewee 45 (6; F; 10 June 2017) feels that it is difficult to remember the strokes. Another girl in Year 8 said:

I think learning the Chinese language is a little bit difficult because there are so many things to learn, such as Pinyin, phrases, vocabulary and writing. And among them, I think writing is the most difficult part because there are so many strokes to learn and remember. I must remember the combination of different strokes. However, I think my Chinese speaking is pretty good because I speak Chinese with my family members and I have more opportunities to practice speaking Chinese. (Interviewee 62, 12; F; 5 August 2017)

A teacher of Year 10 also believed that Chinese writing is the most difficult part for students in his class to grasp. When asked ‘which part do you think is the most difficult part for students to learn?’, he answered:

I am worried about them because in the VCE Chinese subject, writing occupies 37.5 points while the oral test only makes up 12.5 points. It will be disadvantageable for them if their writing skill could not be enhanced as their speaking skill is before the exam. (Interviewee 72, 52; M; 19 August 2017)

The second group of children are those who speak Chinese dialects at home. Though dialects and Mandarin all belong to the Chinese language, there are some differences between the two groups of language speakers in the four types of abilities. The first and second groups of children have similar level of Chinese listening, writing and reading abilities, because the Chinese information they receive from newspaper, internet, and TV programs are similar and they receive the same Chinese schooling. Almost all this type of information is delivered in the Mandarin Chinese.

However, their speaking ability of the Mandarin Chinese is not as high as that of the first group of children. This is because they only speak the Mandarin Chinese during the Chinese class and usually take the English language and the Chinese dialect they speak as the top two preferred languages to speak. After class, they either speak the English language with their peers or speak the Chinese dialect with their family members. Communicating with family members who speak Chinese dialects leads to their mastery of the Chinese dialects and deprives their opportunities to speak the Mandarin Chinese. The most commonly spoken Chinese dialects include Cantonese, Hakka, Shanghainese.

The third group of the children are those who have the Chinese ethnicity but do not have the Chinese-speaking environment at home, such as children whose parents are from Malaysia, Indonesia or Singapore, and children from the interracial family. Contrary with the first two types of children, this group of children commonly self-assess that their speaking ability is not as competitive as their counterparts' speaking ability while their writing ability is better.

This is because that they commonly lack the motivation and environment to speak the Chinese language after Chinese class. Most children with Southeast Asian background speak English or the language of their country of origin rather than the Chinese language with their

family members. In this condition, they have fewer opportunities to practise speaking the Chinese language, which leads to the lower level of their Chinese speaking skills.

However, many of them could write the Chinese well and do not feel that writing Chinese characters is difficult. This is because that unlike children with China mainland background who have the basic communicative needs, this group of children who attend the Chinese community school always have stronger motivation and willingness to learn the Chinese language. Therefore, they always have a positive attitude towards the Chinese language learning. They, as well as their parents, regard the Chinese language learning as an important thing. In a Year 2 class, children with half Chinese ethnicity were found to write the Chinese characters earnestly. The teacher in this class said:

Because they lack the Chinese language environment at home, and their parents always do not speak the Chinese language, their speaking ability is not so good. However, their parents take the Chinese language learning as a serious matter. Sometimes they even ask me if I could assign more homework to help their children enhance the Chinese skills. I think this is very different from the Children with pure Chinese ethnicity.

Because they have the advantages to practice the Chinese language, some of them do not learn it seriously during the class time. (Interviewee 42, 29; F; 10 June 2017)

A teacher from Year 11, also verified this opinion, ‘I think this group of students in my class could write the Chinese characters well but they could not speak well’ (Interviewee 76, 28; M; 26 August 2017).

Overall, because of the different cultural backgrounds, Chinese-Australian children are divided to three groups and they have different unbalanced abilities in listening, writing, reading and speaking. Unlike other Chinese L2 learners whose receptive skills, reading and listening skills, are higher than their productive skills, speaking and writing, children with

Chinese speaking environment at home as assistance always tend to have high abilities in speaking aspect. By contrast, children with strong willingness to learn the Chinese language but without the Chinese speaking environment always take Chinese writing as a serious matter and could write Chinese characters well.

#### **4.4.3 Cultural immersion as a pedagogical approach**

Cultural immersion is regarded as one of the pedagogical approaches in the Chinese community school in Australia, though studies of language pedagogy explored the language pedagogy from multiple perspectives. The main perspectives of research include but not limited: 1) the structural methods which take grammar-translation method (Pratama, Hardyanti, & Hikmah, 2018; Savignon, 1983) and audio-lingual method (Mart, 2013; Saville-Troike, 1973) as typical methods; 2) the functional methods which include the oral approach (Palmer & Hornby, 1937); 3) the interactive methods including communicative language teaching (Hiep, 2007; Savignon, 1987), language immersion (Cummins, 1998; Chamot & El-Dinary, 1999), and community language learning (Samimy & Rardin, 1994; Koba, Ogawa, & Wilkinson, 2000), etc. Compared with methods emphasising ontological learning of a language, such as grammar-translation method which values the grammar learning, and direct method in which language learners are encouraged to imitate the first language to use the second language, cultural immersion approach emerges to be an important approach that is attracted by learners (Athanasopoulos, 2007; Canfield, Low, & Hovestadt, 2009; Kearney, 2010).

Cultural immersion approach is proposed in language learning mainly because that exposure to the culture linked with the target language could stimulate language learners' interest and enthusiasm. Compared the ontological methods, this approach always involves some class activities related with culture or some cultural stories in the language class, which

incentivises language learners to be exposed to that culture and learn the language subconsciously. There are two main methods to help language learners be immersed into the culture of target language.

The first one is immersing the language learners in the local culture, such as sending learners abroad to live in a native speaking environment, which is regarded by some scholars as the fastest way to fluency of the target language (Wallis, 2015). This is also an important part of language acquisition, which is a way to practice the language culturally. This type of acquisition is discussed in the following chapter. The other way to immerse language learners culturally could be conducted in the classroom through class activities related with the target language, delivery of the knowledge of target language in some interesting stories and practices of target language via cultural methods.

Zooming to the Chinese-Australian children, the data collected through fieldwork indicates that they are found to be more interested and active in the content related with cultural activities than in the ontological learning. Chinese-Australian children ranging from Year 1 to Year 12 all show their interest in the content related with Chinese cultures. Culture immersed approach, as either a part of the class content or a form to deliver the language knowledge, is an effective approach to stimulate Chinese-Australian children's interest in learning the Chinese language and thus enhance their Chinese language skills.

In an after-school language program, on which this study is also based, writing with ink brush is used to practise the Chinese language. In this class, students ranged from Year 1 to Year 3. Ink brush is one of the typical Chinese tradition cultural forms which is commonly used in Chinese calligraphy and Chinese painting. It was invented in China more than two thousand years ago. By just inducing the origin of the ink brush, Interviewee 48 (45; F; 14 June 2017), the teacher in this class, had already successfully stimulated students' enthusiasm.

In the following practice session, all students in the class were assigned with an ink brush to practice the Chinese characters they just learnt in the class. Obviously, children were more active in writing the Chinese characters with ink brush than with normal pens. Though ink brush could not be used frequently in daily teaching, it could direct children's attention from the boring grammatical points temporarily and make children know more about Chinese culture, which could verify the effectiveness of culture as a form to deliver the Chinese language knowledge and help practice the Chinese language.

The children in Year 4 who know more about Chinese culture and history also express their interest in the Chinese language learning through culturally immersed approach. When being delivered the grammatical content, children just sit silently without much interaction with their teacher. However, they showed more interest when the teacher introduced the origin and development of Chinese characters, from oracle-bone script, bronze script, seal script to small seal script which is much more recognisable. Through learning the evolution of Chinese characters, the children not only know more about the Chinese traditional culture, but, more importantly, understand the organisation and combination of the strokes of Chinese characters, and understand the ideographic Chinese characters as well. This makes Chinese writing which is usually regarded as the most difficult part of Chinese learning easier. A teacher of Year 4 said:

There are a lot of Chinese cultural symbols could be used as discussion topics in the Chinese class to help children learn the Chinese language in a Chinese cultural environment, such as 'the first emperor of Qin and Terra-Cotta Warriors', 'the architecture in the Imperial Palace' and 'travels back to China'. Through the discussions around these topics, students in my class become more willing to express

their thoughts in the Chinese language, which enhances their Chinese language skills subconsciously. (Interviewee 18, 38; F; 22 April 2017)

Not only are children in low-grade attracted by culture-related content, students in higher grades also express their interest in cultural-immersed approach. Interviewee 60 (29; M; 29 September 2017), a teacher of Year 8, said that he would like to add some Chinese cultural knowledge in his class to mobilise students' interest. For example, when talking about 'Tibet' in class, he explained some cultural points about Tibet to fulfil students' curiosity and stimulate their interest.

Slightly different with lower-grade children, Chinese-Australian adolescents in Year 10, 11 and 12 have more explicit target to prepare a Chinese cultural related topic for the final oral exam. Surprisingly, most of them do not choose the trite topics, such as 'the Great wall' or one of the 'classic Chinese novels'. Rather, the topics they choose usually revolve the Chinese culture from a special and in-depth perspective, such as 'the Women behind Anhui businessmen', which also indicates their interest to explore Chinese culture and their mastery of the Chinese language skills.

#### **4.5 Summary**

This chapter has analysed Chinese-Australian children's Chinese language learning process. Applying the dual-track culturalisation framework, this chapter indicates the in-betweenness of these children and adolescents' Chinese and English skills. This chapter connects Chapter 3 on why they learn the Chinese language and Chapter 5 on how they use Chinese language in multiple settings.

The first section elaborates these children and adolescents' negotiation between the mainstream language and the Chinese language and indicates the change of their language

preference from Chinese to English. The second section analyses two features in their Chinese language learning process, which is continuity and non-continuity. This section suggests that though some of the children may give up learning Chinese language due to the high pressure from VCE exam, many of them acquire the Chinese language in casual forms and may pick up learning it after they finish the exam. Finally, this chapter examines the children and adolescents' learning behaviours from linguistic and pedagogical perspectives.

## **Chapter 5 Chinese Language Use in Different Social Contexts**

After analysing the Chinese language-learning process of school-aged Chinese Australians, this thesis then explores how these children use languages in communication, cultural consumption, and in the other social settings. Similar to the language-learning process, the cultural use of language is also an important method through which the children and adolescents can achieve dual-track culturalisation.

### **5.1 Introduction**

Culturalisation is a complex and continuous process, achieved through language learning as discussed in Chapter 4, and the cultural practices associated with using a language. In the previous chapter, this study examined the learning process through which the children and adolescents are, to some extent, culturalised in a parallel cultural setting, and the characteristics associated with their dual-track learning process. However, the cultural aspect of Chinese language use is also a vitally important part of their culturalisation, though this is largely ignored in the existing literature. Chinese-Australian children who grow up under the influence of western culture and Chinese culture experience bi-fold culturalisation through learning and culturally practicing both languages. Through learning Australian English, daily socialising with English-speaking peers and immersion in the Australian cultural environment, these children and adolescents are culturalised by Australian culture. Meanwhile, through practising the Chinese language, these same children and adolescents experience Chinese culturalisation also.

Through using and practising the Chinese language, the children and adolescents are partly exposed to the Chinese culture. Cultural practices here include, but are not limited to, the

communicative use of the Chinese language; the consumption of Chinese cultural products; the cultural practices of the Chinese language outside the school and home environment; and anything else related to the cultural use of the Chinese language. However, the existing literature over emphasises the schooling aspect of language acquisition, while neglecting the importance of using a language in multiple social settings, especially in terms of using the heritage language. Specifically, the research gaps associated with studies on the non-school practices of the Chinese language could be summarised as follows.

First, the processes associated with being taught the Chinese language, including in day schools and in complementary schools, has been explored in the existing literature, as discussed in the previous chapter. However, how students of Chinese background use the Chinese language outside the school has not been extensively researched. Within the area of research on Chinese language use outside the classroom, most studies pay attention to learning practices that go on within the home environment in such contexts as the UK (Ran, 2000), Canada (G. Li, 2001, 2006), and the US (Wan, 2000; Xiao, 2008; Xu, 1999; Zhang & Koda, 2011). What these studies are mostly concerned with are the processes associated with learning and practicing the Chinese language at home, children's bi-literacy and bilingual skills, and the home literacy environment and its influence on children's Chinese language development. Few of these studies divert their attention from the development of language skills to study the cultural practice or use of the language. For example, these studies do not investigate questions such as what language children speak when they are in the presence of different interlocutors, senior family members, parents, cousins and friends; what the mode and characteristics of their language use are; and how these patterns of language use change over time. That is, these questions have not been properly addressed by previous studies.

The second problem is an extension of the first one. That is, the cultural practices associated with Chinese language use in social settings has been ignored. Though the school and home environments are important spaces for Chinese-Australian children to practice and use the Chinese language, they are not the only important environments. Such children, that is, also use the Chinese language in diverse social settings. However, few previous studies have discussed the issue of cultural practices associated with the Chinese heritage language beyond the milieu of the school and family. They are less concerned with systemically analysing how young Chinese Australians use the Chinese language in wider social contexts, such as in the Chinese community, where they might use the Chinese language to socialise with their Chinese peers, or in other situation where they have opportunities to participate in Chinese activities and events that require the use of Chinese language. The cultural practices associated with the use of the Chinese language in social settings, which is an important part of the culturalisation process, has been largely ignored by previous studies.

Third, apart from language use for communicative purposes, cultural consumption is also an important point to be considered when discussing the issue of language use and practices. However, few studies have looked at the consumption of Chinese cultural products by overseas Chinese. Only a handful of studies on media consumption within the Chinese diaspora have focused on describing the development of overseas Chinese media (Sun, 2005), or provided a few descriptive observations of the children and adolescents' behaviours in connection with such cultural consumption (Xiao, 2008). For example, Xiao believes that advanced Chinese heritage language learners spend more time on book reading, TV watching and character writing than Chinese learners in lower-level do (Xiao, 2008). The other diasporic studies emphasised the influence of Chinese cultural products on the Chinese diaspora, such as their construction of identity (Shi, 2005), while ignoring the role that the Chinese language plays in the interactions between consumers and products.

Based on the dual-track culturalisation theoretical framework, this chapter looks at the cultural use of Chinese language engaged in by school-aged Chinese Australians, especially when using the Chinese language outside the classroom. In other words, it explores how they use the Chinese language culturally and what role the Chinese language plays in their consumption of Chinese cultural products. To answer these questions, multiple methodologies, including class observations, interviews and content analysis are applied to produce research results. Based on the 64 valid responses to questions about these issues provided by interviewees (parents, teachers and children all included), and class observations conducted in 17 classrooms, this research finds that intermingling language is used in their communicative settings, socialising activities that require the use of Chinese and cultural consumption of Chinese cultural products.

This chapter is organised into the following three sections. The first section analyses the pattern of young Chinese Australians' language use, namely the intermingling language use. Intermingling language use is often expressed as mixed use of languages or combination of two or more languages. However, to emphasise the language learners' subjectivity in using languages and the flexibility in switching between language during their communication and cultural consumption, this research applies the concept of intermingling language. This is followed by the explanation of the formation of this special pattern and the dynamic process concerning how they practice the two languages culturally. The second section of this chapter provides a preliminary explanation concerning young Chinese Australians' Chinese language use in their socialising processes when they engage in some social activities beyond the spheres of school and family, probing the characteristics that emerged during this process. The third section presents an analysis of their consumption of Chinese cultural products, as well as the information processing processes that they engage in during such cultural

consumption. This section also provides a discussion about how the consumption of Chinese cultural products influence their personal relations.

## **5.2 Intermingling language: a special pattern of language use**

Because of the complex and dynamic cultural environment in which they grow up, Chinese-Australian children face many issues with respect to their language use, like whether they will speak solely the English or the Chinese language, or a combination of both, whether their choice to speak either of language is conscious or subconscious, and how their code-switching between Chinese and English languages forms and how it will change over time. Based on the data collected from fieldwork and a critical review of the literature, this research finds that rather than solely speaking the English language or the Chinese language, these children mostly adopt a special mode of language use that involves a combination of both languages. They use intermingling language in conversation, cultural consumption and other cultural activities.

This issue is analysed from the three perspectives mentioned above, with Section 5.2 mainly focusing on school-aged Chinese Australian children's language use in their daily communication. Specifically, the first section is dedicated to exploring which language they speak—Chinese or English—when they communicate with different interlocutors, and how they make choice between the monolingual mode and the bilingual mode. Following this, analyses of the formation and dynamics of the special mode of their language use are presented.

### **5.2.1 Children and adolescents as control mechanisms in language use**

The data from observations and interviews of this research indicates that the children and adolescents are quite pragmatic. They switch their use of language consciously according to

whom they are communicating with. This finding contradicts, to some extent, the findings in the literature to date. The majority of studies on the language switching of migrant children argue that children switch languages unconsciously to respond to their linguistic context (Grosjean, 2001; Bernardo, 2005; Rodriguez-Fornells, Kramer, Lorenzo-Seva, Festman, & Münte, 2012). Based on methodologies such as experiments and questionnaires, these studies have concluded that bilingual children switch languages unintentionally, unconsciously and involuntarily. Bilinguals are considered to ‘choose their language of interaction instantaneously and smoothly, in most of the cases even unconsciously’ (Rodriguez-Fornells et al., 2012, p. 124).

Nevertheless, this research finds that this group of children are so smart and pragmatic that they can switch the language they use according to the interlocutors. They understand that to complete the conversation, it is important to know with whom they are talking and then in what language to speak with them. According to the English language skills of their interlocutors and the relationships between themselves and their interlocutors, they know which language it is suitable to communicate in and how much English could be used in the conversation. If their interlocutors are fluent in English, they prefer to communicate in that language. If the Chinese language is the only or the main language that their interlocutors could speak, they switch their language mode to the Chinese language. If their interlocutors know some English but are not fluent in using it, the children tend to combine both languages.

Though bilingual children’s control of language switching and intermingling has been explored from a cognitive perspective by some studies (Abutalebi & Green, 2008; Luk, Green, Abutalebi, & Grady, 2012; Petitto et al, 2001), considering the special characteristics of Chinese-Australian children and adolescents, this part is dedicated to analysing how the

Chinese language and the English language are chosen, mixed, and used by them to facilitate their communication with different interlocutors. According to the general features of interlocutors' language capacities, the interlocutors are divided into three groups to analyse the mode of Chinese-Australian children's language use in conversation. They are 1) parents and senior family members, 2) friends and the wider social circle, and 3) siblings.

### **5.2.1.1 Parents and Senior family members as interlocutors**

Since the language environment of the children and adolescents is always changing on an almost daily basis, their practices and use of the Chinese and English languages are also complex and dynamic. In different stages of their young life, their use of languages has different features.

In the first stage, the children are almost monolingual. The Chinese language is the main language of communication for them before they start schooling. As discussed in Chapter 4, family members are children's main, and sometimes only, interlocutors because they have not started to socialise with their English-speaking peers and have not yet stepped into a society in which the English language is the main language of wider communication. Therefore, being able to speak the Chinese language is enough for them to maintain daily communication and interaction with family members. In this period, the mode of their language use is almost monolingual.

In the second stage, Chinese-Australian children begin to intermingle and combine the Chinese and English languages. As analysed before, these children experience a change of language preference when schooling begins. This change usually takes one to two years to complete. During this period, there are some signs showing that these children begin to use the English language more frequently and the Chinese language less frequently. It is also because of their children's decreasing use of the Chinese language that some Chinese parents

decide to send them to learn the Chinese language. An Australian-born Chinese adolescent who just graduated from high school recalled:

I spoke the Chinese language before attending school. However, when I began to go to school, I began to learn and practise English. The time taken to switch one's language preference is very short. It takes less than one year. At that time, I sometimes spoke the English language even when I went back home, so my parents took it seriously and sent me to learn the Chinese language. (Interviewee 17, 17; F; 07 April 2017)

The change of language preference is also reflected in the case of a male parent (Interviewee 11, 35; M; 18 March 2017). The interviewee 11 said that when his child was about six years old, he found that some English words emerged in his child's conversation with him and his child became reluctant to speak the Chinese language. He added, 'I felt the urgency to maintain and develop his Chinese language abilities from that time'.

The final stage refers to the time period after they finalise the shift of the language preference. At this stage, these children and adolescents are well prepared to seamlessly switch between using Chinese and English according to their interlocutors. Specifically, their interlocutors are divided to three sub-groups of people.

The first sub-group refers to interlocutors who can speak the English language fluently. Specifically, this usually refers to well-educated parents or parents who migrated to Australia for a long period of time. Children prefer to communicate in English with this group of parents because they know that their parents understand what they are talking about. Rather than subconsciously choosing to speak the English language, they do so consciously because they have a good understanding of the language skills of their parents. However, this does not necessarily mean that their Chinese language skills are not developed. To help children

practise the Chinese language, many parents stick to speaking this language even if they could speak English.

Interviewee 19 (37; M; 6 May 2017) and Interviewee 91 (37; F; 9 September 2017) expressed that although their children respond them in English, they prefer to speak Chinese at home in order to create a Chinese language environment for their children despite that some of them could not speak English fluently. Therefore, it commonly happens that children receive information in the Chinese language while responding in English during their conversations with their parents. These children tend to have the ability to switch seamlessly from using one language to another.

The second sub-group are interlocutors who can understand the English language while not being able to speak it fluently. This usually also refers to young parents rather than senior family members. If children's parents belong to this sub-group, the children usually intermingle and combine both the English and Chinese languages, which is a special type of the language use, to respond to their parents who speak Chinese with them. Both children and their parents feel no strangeness about their conversation in intermingling language. A parent expressed that:

It is quite common in immigrant families. Children mix English and Chinese and create a special type of the language. My colleagues from other countries also have the same experience. For example, a colleague from Russia said his child would respond to his Russian questions in English or using a combination of Russian and English. It sounds strange but happens commonly in immigrant families. (Interviewee 93, 30; M; 9 September 2019)

The third sub-group mainly includes parents and most senior family members who cannot speak English. Because Chinese languages, including Mandarin and the other dialects, are the

main, and sometimes the only, languages that grandparents can speak, children and adolescents living with grandparents must switch their language mode to Chinese languages when their interlocutors include their grandparents. This language switching is not involuntarily but rather conscious. In such cases, children are aware of the lack of English language skills among their interlocutors, and so they use the Chinese language, which is not their first or preferred language, to communicate with them.

Among 64 interviews in which this issue has been discussed, 12 families explicitly expressed that they are living with senior family members, and that the children in this family can use Chinese languages, including Mandarin and other dialects, to communicate with their grandparents. This is also one of the important reasons why children learn the Chinese language, which has been discussed in Chapter 3. Interviewee 55 (33; M; 20 June 2017), a parent whose young daughter is in Year 1, said that ‘we speak Chinese at home while my daughter usually responds to us in English. However, when she talks to her grandparents, she switches to the Chinese language because she knows that her grandparents cannot speak English’. Another two children, although they were not currently living with their grandparents, they communicate with their grandparents in Chinese through weekly video chats (Interviewee 71, 32; F; 12 August 2017; Interviewee 66, 13; F; 12 August 2017).

### **5.2.1.2 Communication with peers and in social contexts**

Children and adolescents mainly use the English language to communicate with their peers regardless of the cultural background of the latter. When communicating with friends at day school, English is the only language they use. In Chinese community school, during the class break, they switch their language mode to English from Chinese. All valid responses from the interviewees about this issue verify the solid dominant position of the English language in the process of these children’s maintenance and expansion of their social circles.

Few evidences have been obtained to support the dominant position of the English language in the children's communication with people other than friends. Since children who are immature are still under parental guardianship, they have few opportunities to socialise within the wider society. However, a conversation provided by Interviewee 12 (34; F; 25 March 2017), a parent whose has an eight-year-old daughter, suggests some important implications about what language these children prefer to speak when socialising in the wider society.

Interviewee 12 said that when she took her daughter to the dentist, who is bilingual, her daughter responded, 'English please', when she was asked whether she would like to use English or Chinese to communicate during the process of being treated. Interviewee 12 noted that in general, when the choice of using both English and Chinese was available, her daughter would definitely choose to communicate in English.

### **5.2.1.3 Siblings as interlocutors**

Since their siblings who are in the similar age group always share similar characteristics and language backgrounds with children and adolescents themselves, the language used to communicate with siblings is usually regarded the same language used to communicate with friends. Research to date demonstrates that sibling interactions of bilingual children are usually conducted in the mainstream language (Garcia, 1983; Stevens & Ishizawa, 2007; Wohlfart, 2016) rather than in the heritage language. However, this explanation is overly simplified. This discussion aims to remedy the misunderstanding that the mainstream language is mainly used between siblings and cousins. Based on the fieldwork the researcher has conducted, it is evident that the language that is predominantly used in children-sibling interactions depends on several factors.

Admittedly, it is true that many of the children and adolescents speak with their siblings in English. For many second-generation migrants, if the English language becomes their mother language after they change their language preference, they and their siblings who were both born in Australia use the English language to communicate. English is also the main language of communication among 1.75 generation migrant Chinese children who finish their switch of language preference. For example, Interviewee 27 (40; F; 27 May 2017) is a teacher of Year 6 class and also a mother of two children. In her family, though her 7-years-old daughter was better with the Chinese language than her 4-years-old son, the communications between the older sister and the litter brother were all conducted in the English language.

However, this issue should not be considered in such a simplified way. In some situations, Chinese or the combination of Chinese and English are also used to facilitate these children's communication with their siblings. One main situation is that when both children have not started the schooling, Chinese languages are always the main languages that they use to interact. Interviewee 5 (28; F; 11 March 2017), who has two pre-schooler daughters, said that the Chinese language is mainly used between his sister-sibling children to communicate. Apart from this situation, the age gap between siblings, the time they migrated to Australia and cultural inclinations of family also influence what language they use to communicate.

From the empirical data obtained from this fieldwork, it was found that it is common among some families to have two children, between whom the age gap is quite large. Some of the older siblings were born in China and migrated to Australia during their late childhood or teens, leading to a situation in which the Chinese language became their first preferred language. In this case, Chinese languages or a combination of Chinese and English is used to communicate. Interviewee 38 (6; F; 10 June 2017) who is a Year 2 girl said that she prefers

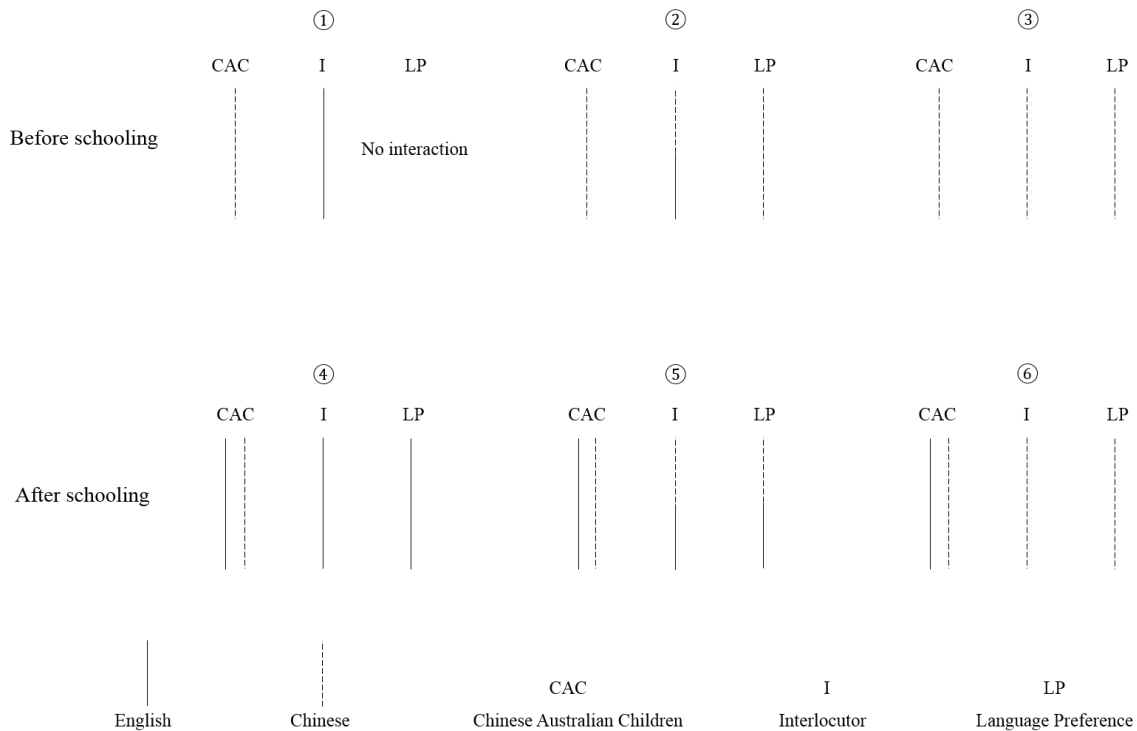
to speak English with her father who is from New Zealand, while speaking Chinese with her mother and her old sister from China.

Faced with this issue, parents have the expectation that the conversation between siblings will be conducted in the English language when they grow up. Interviewee 21 (35; M; 6 May 2017) who has two children, a son in Year 4 and a younger son who was just born, predicts that the brothers will use the English to communicate later.

#### **5.2.1.4 Children as control mechanisms in switching between languages**

As discussed above, according to interlocutors Chinese-Australian children and adolescents communicate with, they switch their languages to conduct daily conversation and socialising. Data collected from the observations and interviews indicate that the code switching of these children is not subconscious, involuntary, or unintentional, but rather conscious, based on their understanding of whom they are talking to and, more importantly, their ability to identify the language abilities of their interlocutors.

These children become bilingual after schooling begins, so it is natural that they have to choose a language to communicate in with others. The mode of language used to communicate between the children and others is determined not by the language abilities of these children, but by the English ability of their interlocutors. Figure 5.1 shows us the mode of the language use among school-aged Chinese Australians. The left line or lines of each sub-figure represent the language that children can speak at that stage, while the right line of each sub-figure represents the language that their interlocutors can speak.



**Figure 5.1 Language switching mode according to the language abilities of interlocutors**

*Source: Proposed by the researcher based on the fieldwork conducted in multiple schools.*

As shown in Figure 5.1, before he or she begins school, the Chinese language is the main language that a Chinese-Australian child uses to communicate. At this stage, the children are almost monolingual. As the first sub-figure of Figure 5.1 shows, since they rarely have interactions with people speaking English, their motivation to learn and speak the English language is not urgent. The second and third sub-figures of Figure 5.1 demonstrate that no matter whether children interact with family members who are fluent in speaking the English language or with family members who cannot speak English at all, the Chinese language is practically the sole language in which they communicate.

However, after attending primary school, the situation changes significantly. Children in this stage switch to bilingual mode rapidly. Compared to the pre-schooling period, which is relatively short, the primary-schooling period is much longer. As the fourth, fifth and sixth sub-figures of Figure 5.1 show, children at this stage develop their bilingual ability and can

switch between languages seamlessly. The language they consciously choose to use is determined by the English ability of their interlocutors. They are well-prepared to face interlocutors with different English abilities.

If their interlocutors can speak and understand English well, they choose to communicate in this language, as the fourth sub-figure of Figure 5.1 indicates. If their interlocutors can understand English but cannot speak it well, they intermingle both the Chinese and English languages to communicate, as the fifth sub-figure of Figure 5.1 shows. This not only guarantees the effectiveness of their communication, but also put these children into the most comfortable and effortless situation to communicate. As the sixth sub-figure of Figure 5.1 indicates, if Chinese is the only language that their interlocutors speak, the child becomes aware of the ineffectiveness of the English language in facilitating communication, so they switch the language mode to Chinese. Therefore, their choice of language to facilitate communication is a conscious behaviour rather than an unintentional one.

### **5.2.2 An analysis of the formation of language-intermingling pattern**

The code-switching between the heritage language and mainstream language is not exclusive to Chinese-Australian children. It is common for migrant children to combine their heritage language and mainstream language to conduct daily conversation. However, the mode of language use of these children has some special features. The most prominent one is that the observed children are themselves well-prepared control mechanisms in switching between languages to face different interlocutors. The formation of this language mixing and switching mode is mainly formed by the joint forces of the special external cultural environment where these children are situated and their individual factors.

More specifically, the complex cultural environment refers to the dual-track cultural environment that Chinese-Australian children live in. On the social side of the dual track in

which they socialise with people other than family members and community members, the English language is the main language that these children use to socialise; inside the Chinese community and at home, the Chinese language is the main language of communication, though sometimes with the assistance of English. In the Chinese community, the Chinese language is required as a *lingua franca* to facilitate communication among community members. Therefore, the level of Chinese language skills required is only communicative rather than professional.

This complex cultural and language settings is also reflected in the special language environments a child encounters at home. The family composition differs<sup>13</sup>, which leads to Chinese-Australian children being able to switch languages flexibly. The requirement for families living with senior family members, such as grandparents, to speak the Chinese language at home is higher than among families with no senior family members at home. For families with parents speaking Chinese dialects, children are sometimes required to speak three 'languages', English language, Mandarin Chinese and a certain Chinese dialect. For families with more than one child where there is a relatively large age gap between them, especially when the older child grows up in China, the younger ones tend to speak more Chinese and might experience the change of communicative language later. Therefore, the complex cultural and language environment contributes significantly to the mixed use of languages by school-aged Chinese Australians.

From the personal perspective of language speakers, they tend to speak the language that requires them to make the least efforts, especially for casual communication. Communication with family members is usually casual and relaxed, which means that children often prefer to use whichever language is the most convenient and comfortable language for them rather

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<sup>13</sup> Some families may have senior family members, or siblings of children.

than a language that requires their concentration in order to find the best and the most appropriate usage. In general, the mode of response that a Chinese-Australian child or adolescent chooses involves whichever requires the least effort in a given case, whether it be English or Chinese or the combination of both languages. This activity and passivity in the process of language use is also embodied in Chinese cultural consumption, which will be analysed in Section 5.4.2.1.

Therefore, the special mode of intermingling language use among Chinese-Australian children and adolescents is led jointly by the external complex dual-track cultural and language environment in which they are immersed, and internal factors, such as children always preferring to speak a language that requires the least effort not only with respect to facilitating communication but also maintaining passivity in the communication.

### **5.2.3 The dynamics of language-intermingling pattern**

The language use by school-aged Chinese Australians is a dynamic process rather than being static. It keeps changing according to the external dynamic cultural and language circumstances as well as the individual responses to these dynamics. This sub-section analyses the dynamic features of school-aged Chinese Australians' code-switching between Chinese, English and the combination of both languages.

First, their intermingled language use begins during their early childhood. Specifically, it usually begins when children start their schooling, and becomes significant around six months to one year later. Children in this stage are usually five to seven years old. This deduction is supported and verified by the data obtained from this fieldwork. Interviewee 11 (35; M; 18 March 2017), a parent whose daughter is in Year 1, and Interviewee 12 (34; F; 25 March 2017), a parent whose son is in Year 2, both expressed that their children solely spoke the Chinese language before they attended the primary school. However, they became

reluctant to speak Chinese and began to combine Chinese and English after they started day schooling.

This phenomenon is caused, firstly, by the increasing interaction with peers speaking the English language via attending the primary school. As discussed in Chapter 4, children experience a change of language preference from the Chinese language to the English language when schooling starts, and their English skills develop rapidly. The code-switching also emerges in the period of changing of language preference. After schooling begins, children become acquainted with and have more contact with peers who speak English, and so their use of this language becomes much more frequent than before. Their concentration on language-learning and use thereafter shifts from the Chinese language to the English language. With their rapid development of English skills, the mode of their language use also changes from monolingual Chinese to intermingling languages. In contrast, the composition of Chinese language in their language use in this period is less than during the pre-schooling period. Before the primary school, the language they use to communicate is dominated by the Chinese language. However, after schooling begins, children spend more time with English-speaking peers or other people of their social circles, while having less time to spend with their family members speaking the Chinese language, which leads to their reduced use of the Chinese language. That the intermingling use of both Chinese and English happens in children's early childhood is also because of their undeveloped language skills. In this period, they can speak neither the Chinese language nor the English language comprehensively. In this condition, they prefer to combine and intermingle both languages to facilitate their communication with others. Therefore, Chinese-Australian children's intermingling use of Chinese and English emerges in their early childhood due to the increasing interaction with English speakers, their decreasing use of Chinese, as well as their under-developed skills with both languages.

Second, Chinese-Australian children navigate between the monolingual and bilingual modes. This feature is initially embodied in the change of mode of language use from solely Chinese language to a combination of both Chinese and English. The change happens during the period approximately six months to one year later after children begin schooling. After this, they continuously navigate and negotiate between the monolingual and the bilingual mode of language use. The monolingual mode of language use includes the sole use of Chinese before children start schooling, the sole use of Chinese in communications with senior family members, and the sole use of English in the socialisation with English speakers. The bilingual mode of language use refers to the different types of intermingling use of both languages.

Finally, the pattern of their code-switching between languages appear to be not easily altered in the future. Language attrition is common among bilinguals. A bilingual's use of a language may decrease due to the change of language environment and language skills might decline accordingly. However, this seldom occurs among Chinese-Australian children and adolescents. As stated in the previous chapters, these children live in a dual-track cultural environment which requires them to grasp both languages instrumentally and culturally. This kind of cultural and language environment is not changed easily, which increases the possibility and necessity for these children's intermingling language use.

### **5.3 Cultural practices of the Chinese language in social settings**

Section 5.2 discussed the cultural practices of the Chinese language among school-aged Chinese Australians in settings of communication. However, the cultural use of the Chinese language is not limited to conversation with others. Data from participant observations and interviews at the multiple schools indicate that these children and adolescents also use the Chinese language outside the classroom and home, and the cultural practices of the Chinese language in such settings also promotes their culturalisation in the Chinese track.

Culturalisation occurs in the Chinese track of their dual-track culturalisation process via culturally practising the Chinese language, though this is almost totally ignored in the literature to date. As discussed in earlier chapters, the current studies mostly focused on migrants' culturalisation through mainstream culture in the mainstream society, while neglecting that they also are culturalised by the heritage culture. The slim research about the Chinese culturalisation process solely focuses on Chinese language use in school or at home rather than on what happens in the wider society. For Australian children of Chinese ethnicity, culturalisation in the Chinese track could happen in either causal forms, such as, community activities, family gatherings, travels back to China or visiting relatives in China, or in more structured forms, such as some school-organised Chinese summer campus activities.

It is understandable that culturalisation in the track other than mainstream culture and society is ignored. This is firstly because people are always culturalised by the dominant language of the country they were born in and live in, which makes researchers pay excessive attention to the culturalisation process in this track. In addition, the global cooling down of multiculturalism leads to an unfriendly environment in which Chinese-Australian children and adolescents might be uneasy to be culturalised by the Chinese culture and language outside the school and family.

Based on the data obtained from interviews and the researcher's observations of Chinese-Australian children adolescents' conscious and subconscious participation of daily cultural activities, this section makes preliminary attempts to analyse how these children use and practise the Chinese language outside the spheres of the classroom and family, trying to explain the Chinese language use in culturalisation happened in the Chinese track. In this

process, these children have different responses to the intensive interaction with and immersion in Chinese culture.

### **5.3.1 Visiting relatives in China**

From class observations and interviews with children, this research finds that many Chinese-Australian children and adolescents go to China during their holidays, with the purpose of visiting relatives or sightseeing. During their travels to China, the Chinese language is their main communicative language and they are immersed in a Chinese language speaking environment. Most of them express that they enjoy the trips to China and would like to go back again.

In a Year 4 class with about 15 students, the teacher asked how students in her class enjoyed the spring holiday, which lasts about one month, with six responses from students expressing that they have travelled back to China to either visit their senior family members or to sightsee in some traditional Chinese scenic spots, such as the Imperial Palace in Beijing and the Terra-Cotta Warriors in Xi'an.

The teacher said to the researcher during class break that since students in her class have learnt something about the traditional Chinese culture last term, such as the Great Wall and the Summer Palace, many of them would like to go to China to have a look at them in person. 'I think it is a good opportunity for them to learn more about Chinese culture and to understand where their parents and their grandparents come from' (Interviewee 18, 38; F; 22 April 2017).

Interviewee 105 (44; F; 29 September 2017), a parent with a Year 12 daughter who migrated to Australia since 6-year-old, expressed that her daughter went to China once a year and that her daughter is even considering hunting for a job in China after graduation from university.

When asked if her daughter enjoyed the trip to China, interviewee 105 added, ‘she really enjoyed travelling to China and she likes Chinese foods!’

### **5.3.2 Participating school-organised activities**

Apart from the engaging interactions with the Chinese culture in a casual form, many Chinese-Australian children attend school-organised ‘Chinese Culture Camp’ activities in Australia, or spring/autumn campus activities that involve going back to China. Both Chinese parents and Chinese-Australian children hold that participating in these well-organised Chinese cultural activities could enhance the children’s Chinese language skills as well as help them understand Chinese culture better. They think that this special cultural atmosphere would strengthen the children’s understanding and inspiration about the Chinese culture. For example, a teacher in a Year 5 class who is also a parent whose child is in Year 4 indicated:

My child is more willing to speak the Chinese language during a trip organised by the school back to China with her peers. This is because the Chinese language skills of her friends are similar to hers and she feels more relaxed about speaking Chinese. She went shopping with others in China and tried to bargain as others do in the Chinese language. (Interviewee 96, 35; F; 9 September 2017)

However, a small group of Chinese-Australian children feel embarrassed to speak Chinese when they are in a Chinese-speaking environment. A Chinese-Australian adolescent who just graduated from high school, expressed that she feels it is strange to speak the Chinese language when she goes back to China. She said that ‘because I am not fluent in speaking Chinese, but I have a Chinese face, when I speak the Chinese language when I go back to China, others might know that I am not a Chinese person’ (Interviewee 90, 17; F; 5 September 2017).

### **5.3.3 Special features in the process of Chinese language use in social settings**

That Chinese-Australian children and adolescents have different experiences in using the Chinese language in the non-school and non-family Chinese-speaking environment is mainly because of their different levels of Chinese skills and their different personalities. However, from the evidence collected from fieldwork, most of these children generally feel more relaxed in using the Chinese language in either form of Chinese activities. During this process, the practices of the Chinese language also help these children to achieve Chinese culturalisation in the social setting. This process has several features.

First, this process of using Chinese language in extra-curriculum activities begins during these children's early childhood when they start to contact with the people other than family members and close friends. Many of them are taken to China with their parents during the holidays from an early age. They are also encouraged by their parents or teachers to attend school-organised Chinese cultural activities when they are young. These frequent contacts with Chinese cultures from an early age make them familiar with the Chinese cultural environment and thus more relaxed about using the Chinese language in the social setting.

Second, using Chinese as part of cultural activities in the social setting are usually more impressive to the children and adolescents than their routine Chinese language-learning and practice at school and at home. Culturalisation is not only achieved through the learning and practice of the language but also by being immersed in the cultural environment with the cultural symbols of that culture. Participation in Chinese cultural activities both in Australia and China as well as the travels to China provide these children with the cultural atmosphere to become familiar with and relaxed about using the Chinese language, which can in turn help them better understand the Chinese culture and become culturalised.

That cultural practices of the Chinese language in the social setting are more impressive is also because such practice of the Chinese language is conducted in a causal way. The subconscious use and practice the Chinese language in a causal way could connect the Chinese language use with special cultural symbols, and thus remind children of what settings the Chinese language is used in. This also helps them remember and comprehend the Chinese language as well as the Chinese culture.

Third, participating school-organised Chinese cultural tour with peers is sometimes more helpful for enhancing the children's Chinese skills than their routine learning and practice of the Chinese language. This is mainly because compared with family members, peers always share more similar interests. As Interviewee 96 said:

My child does not seem very interested in Chinese culture when we tell her about it. Nor does she feel a strong sense of belonging within Chinese culture; however, when she attended a Chinese cultural tour with her peers who share similar Chinese language skills and have more common topics to talk about, she feels a stronger tendency to participate in the Chinese-cultural-related activities and speak in Chinese with her peers. (Interviewee 96, 35; F; 9 September 2017)

Finally, though this process fluctuates, it is continuous and can convert to the maintenance of the Chinese language, which reinforces children's Chinese identity. Affected by the influence of the mainstream language and Australian mainstream culture, the Chinese language and cultural practice and maintenance is not stable. It may change with the external cultural environment. If multiculturalism is supported and endorsed in Australia, the maintenance of the Chinese language will be easier, and vice versa. Other factors, such as the time and effort dedicated to engagement in Chinese cultural activities and the use of the Chinese language also affect the process of Chinese culturalisation.

However, this process is ongoing and continuous. No matter how external factors change, the relations between these children and adolescents and Chinese culture cannot be easily broken. Through practicing the Chinese language in spheres outside the home and school, these children are influenced by Chinese culture continuously, in parallel with the English culturalisation in the other track. The continuous cultural practice of the Chinese language finally converts to the maintenance of the Chinese language and the consolidation of the self-identity of these children, which will be further discussed in next chapters.

#### **5.4 The cultural consumption of Chinese-Australian children and adolescents**

Section 5.2 analysed their language intermingling and switching, especially in communicative settings and Section 5.3 examined how they use Chinese in social settings. In addition to these, cultural consumption of Chinese cultural products is also a very important means by which the children and adolescents use, practice and maintain the Chinese language.

As discussed above, only a handful of research related to cultural consumption by overseas Chinese mainly focused on the development of Chinese media or the influence of Chinese cultural products on the identity-construction of Chinese overseas. They seldom analysed the interactions between Chinese cultural products and overseas Chinese consumption of these cultural products, as well as the role that the Chinese language plays in the cultural consumption process. Considering the research gap in the literature to date, this section is concerned with how the children and adolescents consume Chinese cultural products.

Specifically, this section begins with a critical review of the popularisation of Chinese cultural products and the accessibility of cultural products. Then, this section analyses these

children's information-processing behaviours, exploring their activity and passivity in receiving and understanding information in Chinese, as well as their language coding/decoding in the process of consuming Chinese cultural products. This section finally looks at the influence of being able to understand the Chinese language and consume Chinese cultural products on these children's personal relations.

#### **5.4.1 Chinese cultural products in Australia and their accessibility**

Based on the data collected through fieldwork, this research finds that the demographic increase in the Chinese population in Australia, the development of economic activities related to cultural production and consumption as well as advancing technology jointly promote the popularisation of Chinese cultural products in Australia. However, the accessibility of different types of cultural products varies, and this leads to different influences on Chinese-Australian children and adolescents' cultural use of the Chinese language.

##### **5.4.1.1 The popularisation of Chinese cultural products in Australia**

After the settlement of the 45 000 Chinese students in the early 1990s, Australia has seen a very rapid and significant increase in the Chinese-speaking population (Gao & Zhang, 2017), which fundamentally changed the population composition of Chinese Australians. The increased size and the changing composition of Chinese population in Australia not only affects Chinese Australians' consumption preferences with regard to Chinese cultural products in comparison with earlier groups, but has also provided more opportunities for the field of Chinese cultural products to expand and develop.

Another factor that facilitates the popularisation of Chinese cultural products is technological advancements. Despite the different explanations of newspaper owners or operators, the traditional print media are indeed gradually being replaced by the new media. Many digital

media operators, some of whom are also owners of migration and real estate agencies, operate digital platforms, such as WeChat official accounts, at the same time as operating a print newspaper. In terms of visual media, Chinese cultural products are also under the influence of new technology, advancing from CDs, the increasing quality of television, to live programs. By now, most TV programs could be relayed live through the Internet with ever-increasing net speeds. Technological advancements also promote the communication between Chinese migrants and their family members and friends living thousands away. They can now communicate without delay through instant messaging services, such as WeChat.

The changing population and the advancement of technologies also drive Chinese Australians' economic activities related to the creation of cultural products. Chinese Australians' economic activities transform gradually from retail sale to formal economic activities. The number of Chinese-language newspapers and magazines in Australia remains at approximately 30 (Chen, 2014). Established in 2002, Xinhua Bookstore developed rapidly to become an important outlet from which Chinese Australians can obtain Chinese books. Chinese cinemas, such as Jinghua Xiyuan (Chinatown Cinema) located in Melbourne, as well as some local cinemas broadcasting Chinese films have, also emerged recently to fulfil the increasing demand for Chinese films. Other forms of Chinese cultural products include but are not limited to, concerts held by singers speaking Chinese languages, radios broadcasting in Chinese languages, exhibitions that include Chinese cultural products, menus in Chinese restaurants, and many other kinds of Chinese cultural products.

#### **5.4.1.2 The accessibilities of Chinese cultural products in Australia**

The existing and new-emerging Chinese cultural products mentioned above provide the children and adolescents with Chinese resources and opportunities to use and practise the

Chinese language culturally. However, accessibility to these Chinese resources is not evenly distributed among the different forms of cultural products.

Though newspaper and radio have developed rapidly in the last century and recently, they are mainly targeted mainly at Chinese-Australian adults. Because of the old-fashioned style of information delivery and content, the second generation of new migrants seldom choose Chinese newspapers and radio as their main methods to obtain information.

Though Xinhua Bookstores in Australia has increased the accessibility of Chinese books to Chinese Australians, the diversity of the range of books could not satisfy the children and adolescents' needs. The Xinhua Bookstore sells a great range of Chinese best-seller books, Chinese textbooks and some ancient Chinese books, while providing few children's books, such as some Chinese cartoons and some Chinese novels that are easy to understand. If children lose their interest in reading Chinese books during childhood, which is the most important period for developing their literacy, it will be difficult for them to pick up reading Chinese books as they grow up since it requires a high level of comprehension.

The lack of children's Chinese books is verified by Interviewee 99 (16; F; 16 September), a Year 12 Malaysian Australian of Chinese background. She said that when she was young, she read some Chinese books written by a Chinese writer called Youbin Xu who writes books targeted at teenagers. After she migrated to Australia, she also wanted to stick to Chinese reading. However, she found that Chinese books were difficult to obtain. Therefore, she gradually gave up reading Chinese books at all. Interviewee 105 (44; F; 29 September 2017), a parent who has a daughter in Year 12, also expressed that the Chinese books her daughter read are all brought from China, which is very inconvenient.

Compared with old-style and print Chinese cultural products, visual cultural products in Chinese, such as Chinese TV programs, Chinese TV dramas, Chinese films as well as

Chinese videos on the Internet are far more accessible. This is firstly because of the advanced technologies mentioned before. Second, this kind of Chinese information is shareable, which means that the children can enjoy Chinese programs with their family members rather than simply watching them by themselves. Sometimes, even if they are reluctant to practice the Chinese language, they might be attracted by the interesting content in the Chinese programs, or even just listen to the Chinese programs played in the background. This will be explored in detail in the following parts.

Apart from these products, instant messaging platforms such as WeChat are also accessible for these children and facilitate their communication with their friends. However, according to observations, these Apps are more popular among the 1.25 generation whose Chinese communicative ability is almost as same as that of native Chinese speakers rather than the second generation and the 1.75 generation Chinese immigrant children.

#### **5.4.2 Chinese language use in cultural consumption**

Though there is a general trend of increasing access to Chinese cultural products in different kinds, the speed of absorption of Chinese content by Chinese-Australian children in different types of cultural consumption is different. From information obtained from interviews and observations, Chinese cultural consumption among school-aged Chinese Australians mainly includes three types of cultural products: 1) print cultural products, such as Chinese cartoon books and Chinese novels, 2) Chinese audio-visual cultural products, such as Chinese TV programs, Chinese TV dramas and Chinese films, as well as 3) multi-functional cultural products which mainly refers to Chinese cultural products spread and played via the Internet.

Data obtained from interviews and observations reveal that the active mode of engagement among these children and adolescents, which involves using the Chinese language to consume different types of Chinese cultural products, affects the frequency at which they

consume these Chinese cultural products. The more concentration they require to consume cultural products in Chinese, the less often they consume such cultural product. Data drawn from the fieldwork also indicates that the language that these children and adolescents use to decode information delivered in Chinese via Chinese cultural products is always different to the language that they use to interpret the content that they have received, which we refer to as the information-coding process. Though they have decoding ability with respect to both Chinese and English, they always choose the language that they have better mastery in to code. The following sub-section explains why such children have different language preferences with respect to consuming Chinese cultural products and their information-processing behaviours respectively.

#### **5.4.2.1 Activity and passivity of cultural consumption**

Different cultural products contain different forms of information. Print cultural products mainly contain text messages and probably graphics and images, which means that the information delivered by these products usually is usually in-depth and informative. Audio-visual cultural products, such as TV programs and films, always contain multiple forms of information, including text message, images, sounds, and video and so are more vivid, interesting and attractive. Multi-functional cultural products such as programs delivered through the Internet not only contain multiple forms of information, but are also characterised by user interactivity. Since different types of cultural products have different characteristics, the children and adolescents' use of the Chinese language to consume cultural products differs depending on the type of product being consumed.

Evidence obtained from interviews and observations related to this issue reveal that the activities of Chinese language use in consuming different types of Chinese cultural products influence the frequency of their consumption of cultural products, which also has an

influence on the development of their Chinese language skills. Specifically, the Chinese language use required to consume audio-visual cultural products and multi-functional cultural products is relatively passive, and this contrary to what we might suppose, increases the frequency of their use of Chinese. This consequently promotes the development of these children's Chinese language skills. By contrast, consuming print cultural products requires a relatively higher level of concentration and ability in Chinese language information-processing, which leads to the result that few of the children like to spend time consuming Chinese print cultural products.

Among 35 valid responses related to this issue provided by interviewees including children and their parents, who were asked the question 'what kind of Chinese cultural products do you consume usually?' or 'what Chinese cultural products do your children consume usually?', 23 of them responded that children themselves or their children would like to watch some audio-visual Chinese cultural products, such as Chinese cartoons, Chinese TV dramas, Chinese reality shows, or Chinese films. The cultural consumption here mainly refers to these children's self-voluntariness to watch Chinese TV programs, with only five of them following their family members to watch Chinese TV programs. Chinese cartoons that young Chinese-Australian children watch include *Xiao Feixia (Peter Pan)*<sup>14</sup>, *Xiong Chumo (Bonnie Bears)*, *Xi Yangyang (Pleasant Goat and Big Big Wolf)*, *Xiaozhu Peiqi (Peppa Pig)*, etc. Chinese TV programs that the children mentioned watching alone or with family members include some reality shows, such as *Kuaile Dabenyang (Happy Camp)*, *Feicheng Wurao (If You Are the One)*, *Benpao Ba Xiongdi (Running Man)*, and some TV dramas, such as *Huanle Song (Ode to Joy)*, *Xiyou Ji (Journey to the West)*, *Fayi Qinmin (Medical Examiner Dr. Qin)*.

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<sup>14</sup> These cartoons and the following Chinese TV programs, TV dramas and films are also popular in China and consumed by children in China.

Some of them also watch Chinese films with their family members, such as *Zhan Lang (Wolf Warrior)*.

By contrast, among the 35 valid responses, only five of respondents expressed that children themselves or their children read or have read some Chinese books or Chinese cartoon books, such as *Shiwange Weishenme (One Hundred Thousand Why)*, novels written by Hongying Yang and Youbin Xu, etc. Four parents even expressed explicitly that there were no Chinese books at all at home, and that their children did not like to read Chinese cartoon books, novels or magazines.

The activity in watching Chinese visual cultural programs and the inactivity in reading Chinese print cultural products are mainly due to the different levels of effort required to engage in different types of cultural consumption. Active and passive skills are required for different kinds of Chinese cultural consumption, and this also influences the engagement of these children's Chinese language use and practice.

Specifically, their activity in watching visual programs such as Chinese TV programs and Chinese films is caused by the passive consumption in watching visual cultural products and the relatively high listening and speaking skills of these children. First, the consumption of TV programs and films usually involves passive content consumption. Because of the multiple and comprehensive forms of information delivered by TV programs, consumers of TV programs are not required to fully concentrate while watching them. TV programs and films are usually passively consumed and enjoyed with the comfort of leaning back in the couch or having meals with family members. In this process, children are not required to have a high level of Chinese literacy skills, and they can easily understand the content of TV programs through the interesting and vivid information delivered by audio and video.

Second, as discussed in Chapter 4, these children usually have a higher, and sometimes close-to-native skills in Chinese listening and speaking compared with their non-Chinese learners. This also leads to the result that watching Chinese TV programs is not effort-consuming for them. The passivity involved in the consumption of visual cultural products and these children's relatively higher listening skills in the Chinese language makes it easier and possible for them to approach watching Chinese programs as an important method of obtaining information and relaxing. The ease, comfort and relaxed attitude involved in watching Chinese TV programs and films, in turn, promotes the development of Chinese-Australian children's Chinese listening skills and deepens their understanding of Chinese culture.

Compared with the consumption of Chinese visual products, their consumption of Chinese print cultural products happens much less frequently and much later, or in some cases, it would never happen. This is mainly because reading Chinese print cultural products usually requires the readers to have a high level of Chinese literacy skills and full concentration on the text. Reading is an experience that requires readers to know a great number of Chinese characters and sometimes requires imagination and creativity, which means that reading Chinese books might be a form of drudgery for readers without high Chinese literacy. The limited accessibility of Chinese books and the relatively lower reading ability compared with listening ability have also decreased their interest in reading Chinese print cultural products and, consequently, it is not beneficial for them to develop their Chinese reading and writing skills.

Standing somewhere in-between Chinese visual and print Chinese cultural products, the consumption of Chinese cultural products delivered through the Internet can be either an active form of participation or a passive form of content consumption. Some of them like to

watch videos or browse information in Chinese through the Internet because they just want to consume Chinese information passively in such new ways.

By contrast, most of them are inactive on the Chinese social media which requires them to interact with others. Their 1.25 generation Chinese migrant children counterpart, however, participate actively in interactions on Chinese social media platforms such as Weibo and WeChat. From the class observations conducted for this research, some Chinese students in First Language classes use Weibo and WeChat for entertainment and socialisation. Two girls in a Year 11 First Language class both expressed that Weibo is one of the main platforms that they use to socialise with their Chinese friends, to follow up on hot issues that have happened recently and to relax during class breaks (Interviewee 73, 14; F, 19 August 2017; Interviewee 75, 14; F; 19 August 2017). This phenomenon is seldom witnessed among second generation and 1.75 generation immigrant children and adolescents.

#### **5.4.2.2 Coding-decoding in Chinese cultural consumption**

From the observations that I have conducted during class breaks in the Chinese complementary school, children and adolescents were found to discuss Chinese cultural products such as popular Chinese TV dramas or Chinese shows, but the conversation was undertaken in English. This indicates that they can understand the content carried by Chinese cultural products in Chinese well, which points to the decoding process; however, they prefer to talk about them in English, which refers to the coding process.

Interviewee 5 (28; F; 11 March 2017), a parent who has a Year 1 child, said that though her child wants to tell the Chinese stories she just read to her parents in the Chinese language, because of her child's lack of Chinese vocabulary and ability to use the Chinese language, her daughter finds it difficult to repeat the stories in Chinese. This also happens in a Chinese family with a daughter in Year 3. The daughter prefers to repeat the Chinese stories she just

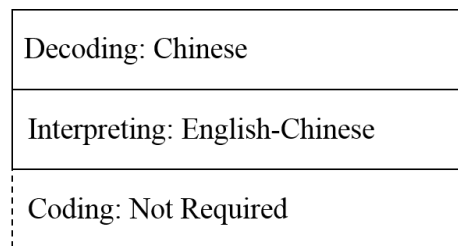
read in English, while her parents help her express and tell the story in the Chinese language to develop her Chinese skills (Interviewee 12, 34; F; 25 March 2017).

This type of intermingling use of languages, which is understanding in Chinese while paraphrasing in English, is mainly caused by the discrepancy of language skills between the decoding process and the encoding process. The encoding/decoding model of communication has been well analysed and explained in the existing literature (Hamada & Koda, 2008; Schramm, 1955). From the formulation to the development of the encoding-decoding model of communication, scholars in this field have provided a theoretical approach to explain how messages are produced and spread through personal communication, and then expanded these theories to probe the production, dissemination and interpretation of information in the mass media field. However, they have not provided an explanation about what role that language plays in this process, especially in the case of migrant bilinguals. In addition, code-switching theory, which analyses the intermingling use of language by bilinguals, mainly focuses on the alternating use between two or more languages in communicative settings (Auer, 2013; Gumperz, 1977; Milroy & Muysken, 1995) but is seldom applied to explain the language use and language switching involved in heritage cultural consumption.

This study cites the concept of encoder, interpreter, and decoder of Schramm's model of communication (Schramm, 1954) while re-explaining them in Chinese-English migrant bilingual's cultural consumption. From the participant observation and interviews, this research finds that the languages used and the roles that these languages play in the process of individual cultural consumption and in the process of face-to-face communication about cultural consumption are different. Based on the data collected through fieldwork, this section firstly analyses the intermingling use of languages in individual consumption of Chinese

cultural products, and then explains how these children use languages during the process of exchanging their feelings and reviews about their cultural consumption.

Figure 5.2 indicates that when the children consume Chinese cultural products, they can understand Chinese easily, which means that they are able to decode the Chinese language message. However, when some cultural products are delivered in the intermingled language combining both Chinese language and English language, such as Chinese TV programs with English subtitles, they prefer to interpret the information in the English language. In the individual cultural consumption process, there is no coding process required, so the bottom part of Figure 5.2 is drawn with a dotted line.



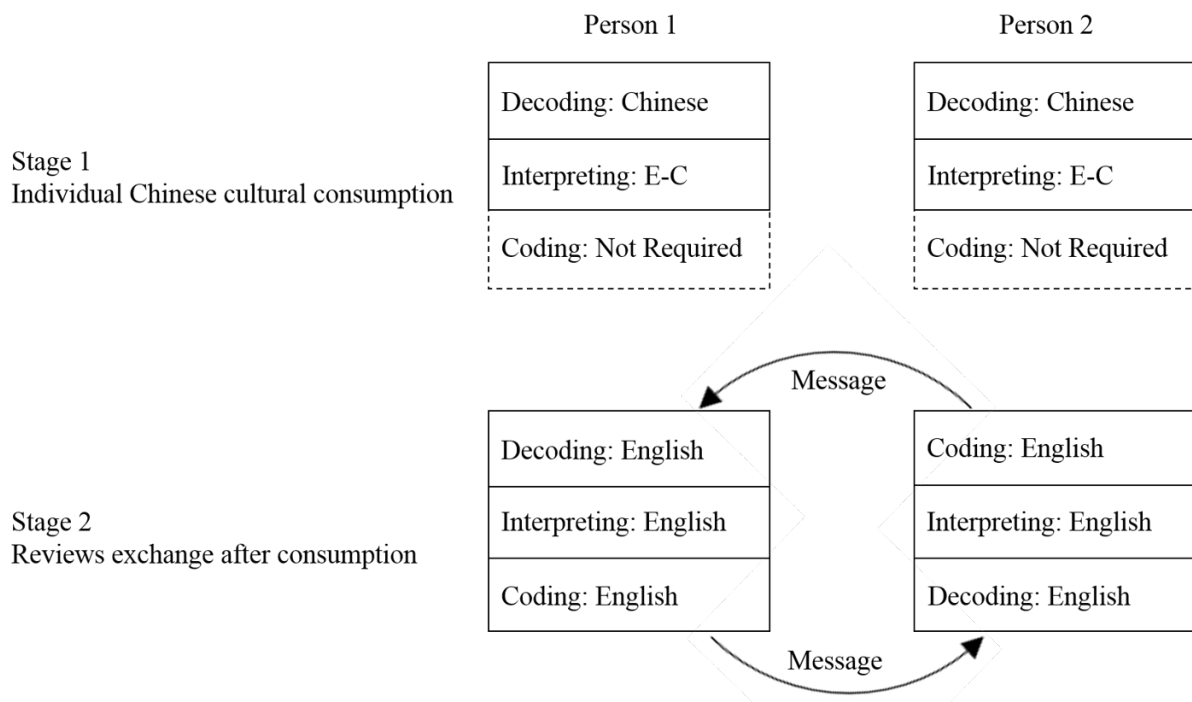
**Figure 5.2 Language use in individual Chinese cultural consumption**

*Source: Drawn by the author based on fieldwork conducted in multiple schools.*

For example, Interviewee 91 (37; F; 9 September 2017), a parent who has a Year 2 daughter, identified that her daughter always laughs one or two seconds later than her and her husband when they watch *Feicheng Wurao (If You Are the One)*, a famous Chinese TV dating game show, together. Later, they discovered that this is because the English subtitles delivered by the program are always one or two seconds slower than the normal content. The delayed laughter suggests that many of these children who watch Chinese TV programs would like to understand the program with the help of English subtitles. After decoding the Chinese information from TV programs, they tend to interpret it with the assistance of English subtitles.

This is verified by Interviewee 63, another Year 8 Chinese-Australian student. She said that she likes watching a popular Chinese drama broadcasted through the net called *Fayi Qinmin* (*Medical Examiner Dr. Qin*) (Interviewee 63, 12; F; 05 August 2017). Since some medical professional words may be contained in this net drama, the researcher asked if it is difficult to understand the content. She said that listening to the Chinese dialogue could help her understand the content. She said that listening to the Chinese dialogue could help her understand the basic content of the net drama, and only with the help of English subtitles could she totally catch up with the content.

Apart from in the setting of individual cultural consumption where these children decode Chinese messages while interpreting them in English, in the communication around the topic of Chinese cultural consumption, the languages that these children use to decode and encode information might be different. Figure 5.3 illustrates the process through which language Chinese-Australian children decode, interpret and code messages related to Chinese cultural consumption.



**Figure 5.3 Languages use in reviews exchange about Chinese cultural consumption**

*Source: Developed by the researcher based on the fieldwork.*

Children and adolescents consume Chinese cultural products in Stage 1 and share their reviews with peers in Stage 2. In the first stage, they decode the Chinese cultural products and sometimes use English to help interpret the information as we just discussed. The main difference occurs in the second stage when communication happens. They shift their language to English when they communicate with their peers about the cultural products they have consumed, which means that they encode the information with the English language. This is because though their Chinese decoding ability is enough to help them understand the content in Chinese, when they encode the information, they prefer the most comfortable and fluent language. In the second stage, both their encoding, interpreting, and decoding process change to communication with the English language.

From the observation and interviews, this research suggests that when children and adolescents consume Chinese cultural products, they might use different languages during the processes of decoding, interpreting and encoding. In individual cultural consumption, they decode the information in the Chinese language, and interpret the message with the help of English. However, when they encode the messages they have obtained through Chinese cultural consumption and exchange it with others, they prefer to encode with the English language.

#### **5.4.3 Uses and gratifications: language's influence on personal relations**

In addition to the abovementioned specialities of Chinese language use in Chinese cultural consumption, the information obtained from fieldwork also indicates the important role that the Chinese language as a heritage language plays in promoting these children and adolescents' personal relations with family members.

The need to build or expand a social circle through mass media has been widely analysed in the literature to date (Rubin, 2009; Sheldon, 2008). As one of the most basic and important needs as understood within the uses and gratifications theoretical framework, building and maintaining personal relationships has been put forward and developed by many studies (McQuail, Blumler, & Brown, 1972; Rubin, 1983; Walther et al., 2010). They argue that through talking about the content of media products, consumers can find a sense of belonging and discover similar tastes with family members, and in this way, promote a good relationship with them. These studies shed light on the gratifications that media consumption can provide for consumers, while ignoring the important role that language use plays for consumers in promoting personal relationships, especially within the family.

From the analysis of data from interviews and participant observations, this research finds that being able to understand the content delivered by Chinese cultural products is beneficial to building close relationships with family members. This is embodied more prominently in visual cultural products than print cultural products.

Through watching TV programs or watching films together with family members, these children and adolescents tend to have more communications and interactions with family members, which can promote their relationships. From the valid responses of the children, five of them explicitly expressed that they always watch Chinese TV programs with their family members, and that they always talk about the content during the watching experience.

Interviewee 63, 12; F; 05 August 2017, a student in a Year 8 Chinese class, said that she always watches Chinese TV dramas with her mum, and recently they watched *Huanle Song* (*Ode to Joy*), which is a popular TV drama series together. She said, ‘sometimes, I cannot understand well, and I ask my mother for help’. Interviewee 63 also went to the cinema to watch some Chinese films with her family members. ‘Recently, *Zhanlang* (*Wolf Warriors*)

has been released. My father promised to bring my grandparents and me to watch it in cinema together', she added. Chinese-Australian children not only watch Chinese TV programs with parents or senior family members, but also with their siblings. Interviewee 91 (37; F; 9 September 2017, a parent with a Year 5 daughter and a Year 2 daughter, said that the younger daughter always follows her elder sister to watch some Chinese TV programs and that they always talk a lot while watching.

However, in contrast with the closed family relationship promoted by consuming visual Chinese cultural products, almost no interviewee expresses that they read Chinese books or magazines together with their family members. This is, on the one hand, because of the low accessibility of the Chinese print cultural products and the passivity in consuming print cultural products that discussed before. On the other hand, due to the different features of visual cultural products and print cultural products, these children cannot consume the print cultural products easily with others. It may also be because of poor reading culture that has emerged in many societies, which is beyond the scope of this study.

Specifically, visual cultural products are mostly shareable and its message is delivered through multiple methods. Even though the children and adolescents could not understand the content totally, they could partly understand the message via the images, sounds and videos of TV programs, or take the assistance with the English subtitles. In addition, it is common that family members rely on the sofa to watch the programs as one of their main ways to entertain. Therefore, these children could easily share the Chinese TV programs with their family members regardless the disparity of their Chinese language skills. Meanwhile, they have more opportunities and more time to discuss the content with their family members, to develop the similar watching interest and habit, which is also beneficial to develop a better family relationship.

In contrast, the experience of consuming print cultural products is always closed. First, print cultural products always have more explicit targets than visual cultural products. Reading has a higher requirement about the language skills of readers, which makes it difficult to read the same book with family members with different levels of Chinese ability. From the data from fieldwork, apart from some parents accompany their children to read Chinese books with the aim to improve their children's Chinese skills during children's early childhood, no children read Chinese book with their siblings or senior family members as a common way to entertain. In additionn, the small physical size of book makes it difficult to read together with several family members. This explains why during class breaks, a Year 6 Chinese-Australian girl read the Chinese cartoon, *Daitou Nongchang (Idiots' Farm)*, by herself silently, while some of her classmates watch the programs played via iPad together.

## 5.5 Summary

This chapter has discussed how Chinese-Australian children and adolescents use the Chinese language in communication settings, social activities and cultural consumption. Along with behaviours associated with learning the Chinese language, the cultural use of Chinese is also an important means by which these children and adolescents can achieve culturalisation in the Chinese track of the dual-track culturalisation process. Chinese language learning and use have direct and far-reaching influences on these children's cultural identity construction, which will be discussed in the following chapters.

This chapter began with an analysis of their language use pattern in communicative settings. Based on the data obtained through fieldwork, this research suggests that the children and adolescents are control mechanisms in language intermingling and switching. They can intermingle and switch between using Chinese and English seamlessly according to the language skills of their interlocutors. This pattern of intermingling language use is a dynamic

process, and it is formed in complex and continuously changing external cultural and social environments and shaped by individual factors.

Apart from in communication and cultural consumption, the Chinese language is also used by them in the context of some other cultural activities, as explored in Section 5.3. Through attending Chinese cultural activities, such as travel back to China and at school-organised summer camp activities, these children develop their Chinese skills and deepen their understanding of Chinese culture and language. The specific cultural scene that they are immersed in and the relaxed atmosphere they experience being with friends make Chinese language use more impressive, which also strengthens their culturalisation in the Chinese track of the dual-track culturalisation process.

Section 5.4 examined how these children and adolescents use language in consuming Chinese cultural products, which has been largely ignored in existing studies. The popularisation of Chinese cultural products in Australia provides children with increasing access to multiple types of cultural products, making it possible for these children to practice the Chinese language culturally. This thesis argues that two characteristics emerge during the process of children's cultural consumption. First, the more a child needs to use active language skills and concentration to consume certain types of cultural products, the less frequently such children consume these cultural products. Audio-visual cultural products and multi-functional cultural products which require a relatively low level of Chinese literacy and less concentration are consumed more frequently, while print cultural products, which require a high level of Chinese literacy and more concentration, are less popular. Second, intermingling language also used in their cultural consumption. Data from fieldwork indicates that they decode information delivered through Chinese cultural products in Chinese with the help of English, while English is their preferred language for encoding messages and

exchanging views about cultural products with others. The intermingling use of Chinese and English helps them to consume Chinese cultural products as well as to share their thoughts about cultural products with others.

In addition, this chapter discussed the finding that being able to understand and use the Chinese is beneficial to these children and adolescents' personal relations with their family members, which is also an important addition to the literature. Through consuming Chinese products together, children tend to engage in more communication with their family members and develop more common topics, which benefits the development and maintenance of family relations. However, this mainly happens in the consumption of audio-visual cultural products rather than print cultural products.

## **Chapter 6      Conflicting but Reflexive Language**

### **Ideologies**

In the first three discussion chapters, I explored school-aged Chinese Australians' motivation to learn and to use the Chinese language, as well as their learning process and cultural use of Chinese. Through learning and using the language, these children form their perception of Chinese. In this chapter, language ideologies of these children, under the influences of conflicting and dual-track cultural environment, are explored systematically. Influenced not only by their cultural environment, but also by conflicting language ideologies among family members and the contradictions of Chinese Australians themselves, these children and adolescents form reflexive understandings of languages to respond to the dynamic cultural environment and guide their language choice and use.

This chapter begins by analysing why language ideologies are important to immigrant children and adolescents, especially those who live in a multilingual context. This is a relatively long introduction on language ideology because that concept and its application to immigrant children may not be familiar to scholars in the fields of sociology, education and migration studies. A brief review of the concept of language ideology and its contextualisation on Chinese-Australian children and adolescents provide readers with some basic knowledge about it and help them approach its meaning and importance. The second section probes the external environment that helps shape children's complicated understanding of language. This includes the longitudinally dynamic and transversely dual-track cultural environment at the macro level, and the tensions and dilemmas within the family at the micro level. This chapter is then followed by children's negotiation between language imagination and the reality, exploring when space for language use is open after

children attend primary school, how they adapt to the conflicts and contradiction between the language imagination and reality. The fourth section attempts to classify their language perceptions and their behaviours in Chinese language learning and use under the covert guide of their language perceptions. It is then proposed the characteristics these children and adolescents have regarding language ideologies' formation. The final section of this chapter is a summary.

## **6.1 Introduction**

Before analysing the children and adolescents' language ideology, this section re-examines the concept of language ideology, especially in the multilingual context. Considering the special language environment in the Chinese community in Australia, this section then contextualises the conflicting language ideologies in the Chinese community of Australia, in order to clarify the cultural environment in which these children form language perception.

### **6.1.1 Language ideologies**

In this chapter, I apply the term 'language ideology' to represent a set of attitudes and perceptions shared by language speakers of a certain group. Proposed by Silverstein in 1979, 'language ideology' is defined as 'beliefs about language articulated by the users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use' (Silverstein, 1979, p. 193). Since then, researchers have explored this concept and argue that language ideologies represent and reflect personal values, cultural attachments, economic and political power, and social functions of a certain language (Bacon, 2018; Blommaert, 2006; Curdt-Christiansen, 2016; King, 2000; Kroskrity, 2010; Martinez-roldan & Malave, 2004; Song, 2010).

Language ideologies, the wider cultural and social environment, and individuals are mutually influenced. Language ideologies of individuals with low self-reflexivity are shaped largely by

the external environment that individuals are immersed into, while individuals with relatively high self-reflexivity keep shaping and reshaping their language ideologies, which may in turn reconfigure the cultural and language environment they live in. Therefore, to identify one's language ideology and to explore individuals' agency and reflexivity in constructing language ideologies is vitally important.

However, as language ideologies are always context-bound, dynamic and heterogeneous, they 'should not be understood as fixed characteristics reflexive of an individual's core being' (Bacon, 2018, p. 2). They are not necessarily amenable to simple quantification and measurement (Bacon, 2018; Kroskrity, 2004). Rather, language ideologies are regarded as performative (Johnson, Milani, & Upton, 2009; Field and Kroskrity, 2009; Rosa & Burdick, 2017). They can be performed and presented by individuals' language learning and use behaviours. Through routine conversation about and in a particular language, individuals express their perceptions about languages subconsciously. In the case of school-aged Chinese Australians, though they are too immature to form the complete and complex language ideologies about the Chinese and English languages, and it is difficult to measure or quantify their language ideologies, their behaviours of learning and using both the languages, to a large extent, represent their current perception of languages and the formation of more complex ideas.

### **6.1.2 Conflicting language ideologies in the multilingual context**

Due to the conflicts between the mainstream language and less-dominant languages, issues of language ideologies are even more complex in the multilingual and multicultural context. In the process of language minority groups integrating into the mainstream society, they develop their own language ideologies to guide their routine language use and social interactions. In such context, the over-dominant presence of one language may cause tensions between this

language and the other languages. Language ideologies that serve as covert rules to uphold social or political values for a community (Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994) may also influence and are shaped by ‘local and national policies’ (Arya et al., 2016, p. 43) from the macro perspective, and family inclination (Curdt-Christiansen, 2016) from the micro perspective.

Policies at the national level is often one of the most influential factors constructing minority community members’ language ideologies about both the mainstream language and the heritage language. For example, the English-only policies implemented in California during the late 1990s were a pushing force against the use of minority languages (Arya et al., 2016; Callahan, 2005; Ovando, 2003). In a study of Chinese-English bilinguals in Singapore, Curdt-Christiansen (2014) found that ‘when facing the socio-political and educational realities in Singapore, these parents are coerced to place Chinese and English into a dichotomous position’ (p. 35).

However, not all national and state policies are enacted against the development of minority languages. In the Australian context, or more specifically in the State of Victoria, where this study has been conducted, there is not only a policy of multiculturalism, but also an arrangement to financially support for community schools. This promotes the maintenance and development of community languages, which thus stimulates heritage-language learners’ enthusiasm for learning, maintaining and developing the heritage language. According to my participant observations and interviews, the size of several Chinese community schools in Victoria with about 5000 students, is much larger than their counterparts in State New South Wales (Interviewee 8, 48; M; 13 May 2017).

Compared with the macro policy influences, family members’ language ideologies act at the micro level in forming children’s language ideologies. Several studies of migrant families identify parental beliefs’ impact on children’s language ideologies construction, such as

Spanish-speaking families in New Zealand (Berardi-Wiltshire, 2018), Chinese families in Singapore (Curdt-Christiansen, 2009), Russian-speaking families in Israel (Moin, Schwartz, & Leikin, 2013), Spanish-speaking Ecuadorian families in the US (King, 2013). Though parental ideologies of languages play an important role in forming their children's language ideologies, family members are not always the same as language ideological groups. A family may have members with diverse and contradictory language ideologies. In the context of Chinese families in Australia, conflicting language ideologies among family members exist commonly. This study takes these conflicts and contradictions into consideration when discussing the children and adolescents' perception of language.

### **6.1.3 Contextualising conflicting language ideologies in the Chinese community**

Studies explore the conflicts among the mainstream or the official language and the migrant community languages in the multilingual context, proposing that the over-dominance of the mainstream language may reduce the motivation and enthusiasm of minority language maintainers in learning and using the minority language (Allen, Crago, & Pesco, 2006; Corson, 1991; Curdt-Christiansen, 2016; Hussain, 2015; Song, 2010). However, this study conducts in a language context where English as the official language and Chinese as the heritage language are well-matched language powers for Chinese-Australian children and adolescents living in multicultural Australia. Within the Chinese community and within family, they use Chinese to communicate, consume cultural consumption, socialise and be culturalised; meanwhile, in the wider social context, they use English to interact and expand expend their social circle.

In recent decades in particular, with the rise of China and Australia's historic shift toward Asia, China has recently provided many new immigrants with 'the opportunity to be economically successful' (Gao, 2017, p. 225). This has profoundly influenced how Chinese

parents perceive the Chinese language, with many of them aware of the importance and the potential usefulness of being able to speak the Chinese language, which in turn promotes the supportive language environment for children and adolescents to develop the Chinese language skills. However, the speciality and the new changes of this language environment, as well as the influence of the changing environment, has not been fully considered in the existing literature with regard to the analysis of the language ideologies of school-aged Chinese immigrant.

This chapter attempts to fill the abovementioned research gaps, analysing their perception of the Chinese language and how their perception of language has been formed under the influence of their learning and using process of Chinese, which have been discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. Based on the lengthy observation in multiple classrooms and 16 valid responses to questions about these issues provided by interviewees, this chapter probes into the following questions: What is Chinese-Australian children's perception of Chinese language? How and by what factors is their language ideology influenced? Are their perceptions of language conflictual within the family? Within the group of Chinese-Australian children and adolescents, do they have the same understanding about bilingualism and especially the Chinese-language side? Do language ideologies change over time and with self-cognitive development? And if so, how do language ideologies change?

## **6.2 Macro- and micro-environments for the formation of perceptions of language**

Though the children and adolescents live in the same broad cultural environment, despite the differences in individual families, they have different, even conflicting perceptions on Chinese language. However, their conflicting perceptions have a high level of reflexivity because of the special cultural environment they are immersed into, and their individual

negotiation between language imagination and realities. This refers specifically to the longitudinally dynamic and transversely dual-track cultural environment on the macro level, conflicting language ideologies within the family on the micro level and the self-examining, self-developing and self-fostering perception of Chinese language on the personal level. This section analyses the cultural environment on the macro level and the family environment on the micro level, examining the external cultural circumstances in which they form their reflexive language ideologies.

### **6.2.1 Longitudinally dynamic and transversely dual-track cultural environment**

The changing external cultural and social environment has far-reaching influence on the construction and transformation of children and adolescents' perceptions of language, and the case in Australia is no exception. However, what is special to Chinese-Australian children and adolescents is that, apart from being influenced by the external environment, their understandings of language also involve the process of shaping the external cultural and language environment, and thus reconfigure how people perceive the Chinese and English languages. This is a mutually influential process occurring among three sides: the dual-track language environment in which they live, the school-aged transnational individuals who learn and use Chinese, and their continuously adjusting language ideologies.

From the longitudinally dynamic perspective, the rise of China and the ever-closer Sino-Australian relations change people's perception of Chinese and increase the Chinese immigrants' enthusiasm for maintaining their Chineseness. Though China-Australia relations politically have had their 'ups and downs' (Lowy Institute, n.d.), Chinese Australians' language choice is influenced more by the demographic transformation and by the economic ties rather than the political factors.

The population of the Chinese community in Australia has been changed in two major aspects, namely the size and composition of the population, since the settlement of 45 000 mainland Chinese students in the early 1990s. The newly arriving migrants not only increase in number, but also are characterised as well educated, skilled and capable to invest.

Compared with the pre-1990s era, when people did not value the importance of learning and maintaining Chinese skills, recent decades have been witnessing the increase in the number of Chinese migrants, emphasising the capacity to speak Chinese, and sending their children to learn Chinese. This not only helps indirectly to develop Chinese language education in Australia, but also subtly influences children and adolescents' perception of Chinese and Chineseness.

From the socio-economic perspective, 'Australia-China relations are characterised by strong trade bonds' (Lowy Institute, n.d.). 'The normalisation of diplomatic relations in 1972 paved the way for economic relations between Australia and China and put Australia in a position to benefit from the opportunities arising from the significant transition that would begin in China a few years later' (The Treasury, 2012). The significant increase of China's share of Australia's total merchandise trade happened in the early 2000s, when Australia witnessed the rapid increase of migrants from mainland China. Many new migrants maintain the ties that they established in China and develop their businesses. This makes them aware of the importance of being able to speak Chinese. Many Chinese parents send their children to learn the Chinese language because they see being able to speak Chinese is beneficial in career development. Children, under this background, regard learning and using Chinese as an acquiescent collective behaviour because most people around them do so. These demographic and economic changes that happened in the Chinese community in Australia keep configuring children's understanding of language. This could be verified by two interviewees

who have been living in Australia for decades and have experienced the significant change happening in the Chinese community in Australia.

Interviewee 58 (55; F; 21 June 2017) is a third-generation Malaysian-Chinese teacher who migrated to Australia in 1992. She began her Chinese teaching career at Richmond West PS and has been witnessing the dramatic change of Chinese language ideologies in Australia. In the early 1990s, Australia had not seen the significant benefits from the rapid increase in the Chinese-speaking population, while China had not totally recovered from the economic downturn due to the Cultural Revolution and transformed its backward economy fundamentally. The situation of Richmond West PS, as well as people's attitude towards the Chinese language, were the epitome of the social-cultural environment at that time. The teaching activities were not systematic, and the textbooks were not unified. Some teachers even blamed the few enrolments on the uselessness of learning Chinese as a second language in this school. 'Under this backdrop, children could not learn Chinese well and they did not know Chinese characters because they did not regard learning Chinese as an important thing. And they even looked down on learning Chinese', Interviewee 58 said.

However, Paul Keating's push for the shift towards Asia in the early 1990s and John Howard's official visit to China in 1997 are believed to have set up the relationship very effectively. In addition, the settlement of the Chinese students in late 1980s and Hongkong handover back to China in 1997 helped change people's perceptions. After Australia benefited from the hysteretic influence of the rise of China and its economic development, Chinese Australians' perception of Chinese language changed significantly. Interviewee 58 added:

With the rapid development of China, the enrolment of students increased, which promoted the development of Chinese teaching in School R. This thus changed the

local Australians' perception of Chinese language. Some local Australians even purchased real estate near the school to let their children attend this primary school to learn Chinese. (Interviewee 58, 55; F; 21 June 2017)

The enthusiasm of Australians for learning Chinese has been influencing subtly the people's understandings, especially the Chinese language ideology of Chinese Australians and their children. The usefulness of learning Chinese, instrumentally and culturally, is acknowledged by the newly arriving Chinese migrants, which serves as an important backdrop to helping construct Chinese-Australian children's language ideologies.

Another piece of empirical evidence comes from Interviewee 89, a Chinese student who just graduated from high school. She was born in Australia and her parents migrated from Shanghai during the 1990s. She witnessed the increasing number of Chinese people in Australia. She indicated:

I could feel strongly that the number of Chinese-speaking people has increased. I felt shocked that when I went to Box Hill<sup>15</sup>, I did not even need to speak English, because people around were all of Chinese background and most of them could speak Chinese. (Interviewee 89, 17; F; 5 September 2017)

From the transverse perspective, the children and adolescents live in a dual-track and conflicting cultural environment. The huge differences between Australian culture and society and Chinese culture and society lead them to find the most suitable and comfortable situation during their self-negotiating process despite being largely guided by their parents. They develop their English skills intentionally and subconsciously, as all other Australian children do because English is the official language to communicate and to socialise.

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<sup>15</sup> Box Hill is one of the suburbs with the largest Chinese population in Melbourne.

However, they could not ignore and avoid the continuous influence exerted by China and Chinese culture.

In addition to the cultural influence, from the practical perspective, many Chinese migrants earn a livelihood depending on their relationship with China. Their businesses range from a small business, such as restaurant, to some large-scale firms, such as schools, media outlets, cinema, etc. The close ties between Chinese migrants and China contribute to their awareness of the usefulness of being able to speak Chinese, or at least help them re-consider the necessity and helpfulness to learn and to maintain Chinese.

In addition, some scholars point out that ‘China has long loomed as a threat in the Australian imagination’ (Gao, 2018, p. 233). Conflicting issues which have happened periodically, such as the National Security Legislation Amendment (Espionage and Foreign Interference) Act 2018, largely evoke people’s inclination to examine and rethink China and Australia-China relations. Though it is hard to say in what way the periodically strained China-Australia relations have influenced Chinese migrants in Australia in regard to Chinese language use, at least it serves as a social environment that is characterised as conflicting, and it may affect children’s decision making about language choice, language development and language maintenance.

### **6.2.2 Contradictory language ideologies and practices within family**

Apart from being influenced by the dynamic dual-track cultural environment at the macro level, the children and adolescents are also under the effect of language ideologies of the family at the micro level. The broad cultural environment that they are living in is almost universally the same, while language ideologies of families vary, having different influences on their construction of their understanding of language. In this process, they are not passively affected and shaped by family members and family language ideologies; rather,

they are involved positively in the language ideology construction process, except a very small group of children who are absent from Chinese language schools or classes. This section explores conflicting language ideologies within family from two aspects, with one focusing on tension among family members and the other on the dilemma of Chinese parents in regard to their children's bilingual skills.

### **6.2.2.1 Tensions among family members**

Instead of sharing unified language ideologies, members of many families often hold different, sometimes even contradictory, ideas and understandings about the Chinese and English languages. Tensions among family members in regard to the Chinese language exist commonly. In some families, tensions happen less frequently and less apparently, with family members sharing similar beliefs about Chinese language use and developing the bilingual skills of the child or children in this family. However, in some families, tensions among family members in regard to learning and maintaining Chinese are rather serious and may have a negative influence on children's Chinese learning and thus recoil on their perceptions of Chinese language.

The case of Interviewee 86 (46; F; 2 September 2017) could provide evidence of weak tensions among family members. In interviewee 86's family there are four family members: Interviewee 86, her husband, an 18-year-old son and a daughter who is Interviewee 87 (11; F; 2 September 2017). They share similar language ideology: that is, making efforts to develop and maintain Chinese skills. This not only promotes the children's learning of Chinese language but also exerts a positive influence on their perception of the Chinese language. From the interviews with Interviewee 86 and Interviewee 87, the researcher knows that the elder brother scored 52 after scaling in VCE Chinese, which is an extremely high score, and as a university student he currently also enrolls in Chinese subjects to maintain and develop

his Chinese language skills. Following the example of her brother, Interviewee 87 also expresses a strong interest in learning and using the Chinese language. In Chinese community school, the class she attends is a so-called elite class for best-performers that requires children to have relatively better language skills than those of children in normal class, and students in this kind of class usually obtain higher scores in the final exam. This couple of siblings' enthusiasms for learning the Chinese language is caused partly by the supportive family atmosphere and the infrequent tensions among family members regarding the language maintenance.

The family circumstances of many children in the Chinese community in Australia are similar to those of Interviewee 86's family. In such families, the language environment for children to learn and to use Chinese is supportive, which has a positive influence on the process of forming their perception of Chinese language. However, the extremely supportive family may cause children's negative feelings, which may lead to the other side of polarisation. In this case, some of the children are reluctant to learn Chinese, which means that in their perceptions and ideas the Chinese language is not that important, useful and worthy of learning and using. Children and adolescents are led to the two sides of this polarisation of Chinese language ideology due to many factors, such as modelling of siblings, the relationship between children and parents, family cultural inclination and peer pressure.

From interviews and observations, I found that Interviewee 91(37; F; 9 September 2017)'s family is a typical case at the other end of the polarisation spectrum. Interviewee 91 has two daughters in Year 5 and Year 2 respectively and family members had different, and even opposed, perceptions towards learning and use of Chinese. Interviewee 91 and her husband migrated to Australia about a decade ago. Both of them encourage and support their two daughters to learn and use the Chinese language. They send their children to Chinese

complementary school and also play some Chinese programs when they are at home. To help their children practise Chinese, the parents even set a family rule, which is, ‘Only Chinese at home between seven and eight pm’. This works as the ‘language corner’ in China to create the atmosphere of language learning, which is quite Chinese-style parenting. However, this does not promote their children’s enthusiasm for learning and using the Chinese language but leads to their resistance to using Chinese. Interviewee 91 said:

At first, we thought that if we set some limitation on language use they could have more time to practise and use Chinese. This would help them develop their Chinese language skills. The outcome turns out opposite to our expectation. Neither of my daughters speaks during that hour. (Interviewee 91, 37; F; 9 September 2017)

Parents’ over-enthusiasm and push for their children to learn Chinese and the children’s lack of interest in doing so are extremely contradictory, which contributes to children’s confusion regarding how to perceive Chinese, and thus leads to their resistance to using it.

Though this case may not happen often, the phenomenon that it reflects is common among many Chinese families in Australia. The extent of tension among family members in regard to Chinese language use leads to children’s different perceptions about Chinese language.

The situation becomes even more complicated when three generations live together.

Interviewee 79 has two children – a son just graduating from high school and a daughter in Year 5 Chinese class. They live with senior family members, Interviewee 92’s mother and father. According to Interviewee 92 (42; F; 9 September 2017), her enthusiasm for letting her daughter learn Chinese is not that strong. ‘I think interest is the most important thing. If she does not have interest in learning it, she could give it up’, she said. However, the grandparents in this family insist on their grandchildren maintaining their Chinese language skills. Interviewee 92 said:

My mum thinks being able to speak Chinese is important to my children because it is the main communication language between them. Sometimes when I am busy with my work, my parents take care of my daughter. They insist on sending her to learn the Chinese language. (Interviewee 92, 42; F; 9 September 2017)

In Interviewee 92's family, her little daughter's understanding about learning Chinese language is influenced jointly by the support of her grandparents and the indifferent attitude of her parents. Under these influences, the girl was found to learn the Chinese language with a casual attitude in class. This attitude, in return, affected her parents' and grandparents' positivity for her learning Chinese.

Analysis of the three cases above indicates that in a particular family, family members' language ideologies may conform or be conflictual, which leads to tensions of language ideologies between family members, which are presented in diverse forms. Conflicting language ideologies exist among intergenerational family members, which has a significant influence on the construction of children's perceptions of language. Though most Chinese parents tend to encourage their children to put Chinese into an important position in their perception of language use, how the children perceive the language and whether they take Chinese as an important language to keep, is an important step in the process of their self-reflexivity.

#### **6.2.2.2 Dilemma between Chinese skills attrition and English skills development**

The tensions within families in regard to language use are not only embodied among intergenerational members, but also in the contradictory thoughts about language development of each individual, especially among the group of parents. These Chinese parents are stuck in a dilemma of their children's language skills development. They are not only worried about their children's Chinese attrition, but also concerned about their English

development. The conflictual perceptions of the development of bilingual skills exist commonly in Chinese parents in Australia, especially those have high expectations for their children's academic excellence.

On the one hand, Chinese parents worry that children's Chinese language skills may decrease with the increasing exposure to an English-speaking environment. As discussed in Chapter 4, like many other immigrant children, Chinese immigrant children tend to experience the change of language preference from heritage language to mainstream language, namely from Chinese to English. This change happens rapidly after these children attend primary school.

On the other hand, these parents are also worried about the development of English skills in their children. Before children attend school, Chinese is the main language they use to communicate in. Though experience from many Chinese parents has proved that these children shift their language preference to English very fast, taking about six months to one year, some Chinese parents who have children in this stage also express their anxiety and concern about whether their children can catch up with the English skills of children who have a Western background.

Interviewee 21 (35; M; 6 May 2017) migrated from Shanghai to Melbourne two years ago. By the time of interview, his son who is in Year 4, was fluent in Chinese and regarded Chinese as his main language. In school, maths is easy for his son while English is a bit difficult. Interviewee 21 is worried about his son losing his ability to speak Chinese, so he and his wife let his son write a diary. They encourage him to use more descriptive wording and details about what happened, aiming to help his son maintain and develop Chinese language skills. On the other hand, Interviewee 21 is worried that his son might not catch up with others in English skills, so when they are at home, Interviewee 21 plays English TV programs and cartoons to create a language environment to help his son develop English

skills. Interviewee 21 said, ‘Even though I have the expectation that my son will speak English with his just-born little brother in the future, I still have concerns with his English skills in the current stage’.

This does not only happen in 1.75 generation migrant children<sup>16</sup>, but also in Australian-born Chinese children’s families. Interviewee 10 (38; F;18 March 2017) has two children, a six-year-old son and a one-year-old daughter. Her son attends primary school and before this he mainly spoke Chinese. Her daughter is just learning to speak and also uses Chinese. Even though Interviewee 10 was told by other Chinese parents that her children’s English skills will develop rapidly in Years 1 and 2 at school, she still has a deep concern about her children’s English skills.

Chinese parents in Australia are always stuck in the dilemma of balancing their children’s bilingual skills’ development, due to a series of complicated environmental factors and specialities of Chinese migrants. First, the dual-track but conflicting cultural and language environment inevitably leads to a dilemma. Chinese-Australian children live in the Chinese community and in Australian mainstream society simultaneously. Parents of all immigrant children anticipate that their children face a choice between mainstream language and heritage language, and Chinese parents in Australia are no exception even though some of them are under more pressure to do so than other communities. Because of the dual-track cultural environment, Chinese-Australian children tend to have a preference of language use between Chinese and English once they attend primary school. During this stage, their English skills develop rapidly and usually exceed their Chinese skills, which means they usually feel it is difficult to find a balancing point between Chinese and English to guarantee the simultaneous development of both languages.

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<sup>16</sup> This term was explained in Chapter 1.

Second, as hinted, unlike some other heritage languages that are much less dominant among migrant children, the Chinese language is well matched with English in regard to its influence on the children, which contributes to parents' concern about their children's language skills development. On the one hand, the Chinese community in Australia has been developing rapidly in size and in economic activities, which creates the environment, directly and indirectly, for the children to develop their Chinese language. Parents whose children are not able to speak English fluently, usually before they attend school, worry about the children's ability to catch up with others in this area. On the other hand, after the rapid shift from Chinese to English that often happens when children start primary school, their parents may worry about the obvious attrition of Chinese, which may be exacerbated by their knowing the benefits of being able to speak the Chinese language with the rise of China in the world.

Third, due to the other macro-level socio-economic environmental factors discussed before, these parents' psychological status is special, which also contributes to their dilemma.

Though the number of Chinese people obtaining permanent residency and even citizenship has been increasing, many of them feel being alienated from Australian society. Especially recently, the rise of China and the close China-Australia relations have increased the possibilities for their children to have more interactions and expand connections with China, which indicates that being able to speak Chinese is beneficial for them. Australia's periodical resurgence of anti-Chinese sentiments has also played its role in this process. Since these parents are not certain about the future development of their children, they mostly take a wait-and-see attitude towards learning Chinese. Under such circumstances, they hope that both the English and Chinese language skills of their children could be developed and maintained simultaneously, in order to face the ever-changing condition.

### **6.3 Negotiation between language imagination and realities**

According to the analysis of data collected from fieldwork, this research also identifies that apart from external cultural environment, children themselves also play an important role in constructing their understandings of Chinese language. By receiving information from the macro and micro socio-economic and socio-political conditions discussed before, such as China's growing importance to Australia, Chinese-Australian children are situated in the process of verifying their inherent perception of the Chinese language with the reality of language use. Attending primary school is set as a wall between a closed community and a generally open space for their language use. Before attending school, their family environment serves as a place where these children could form their language imagination about Chinese. This kind of imagination will be verified in the reality when they have more interactions with others when they attend primary school. This section first discusses why the language community is almost closed before children's socialisation in the broader society and how this closed language community becomes generally open. Then, this section analyses the conflicts emerging between children's language imagination and realities.

#### **6.3.1 A Closed community against a gradually open space for language use**

The current literature identifies the bilingual skills of immigrant children and analyses their code-switching ability between languages in different communicative settings. Many of them also explore the occurrence of immigrant children's simultaneous use of heritage language and mainstream language. However, few explore the physical scope of these children's language use. According to data collected for this research, the language-use community for these children is characterised as gradually open. This specifically refers to the time before primary school, when the scope of language use for these children is almost closed or within a narrow circle, while the openness becomes significant with their stepping into primary

school – an important stage when they start to socialise with people other than family members.

The feature of ‘gradual openness’ is captured from participant observation in the Chinese community in Australia and from the interviews. Interviewee 82 is a parent whose son was born in Australia and learnt Chinese in a preschool class. Her son preferred to speak Chinese before attending school, not only because of his fluency in speaking it at this stage but, more importantly, because of the ‘closeness’ of her language environment. Interviewee 82 said:

There was almost no opportunity for my son to speak English before receiving formal schooling. His action radius was really limited, ranging between home and the Chinese community. On weekdays, my parents took care of my son and they mainly use Chinese. During weekends, even when we took him out to family banquets, we always chose Chinese restaurants where speaking English was not required. (Interviewee 82, 29; F; 2 September 2017)

From the experience of language use of Interviewee 82’s son, we can see that the trajectory of language use for Chinese-Australian children is almost closed before they attend primary school. Interviewee 82 also compared their experience of living in the Chinese community in Australia with their trip to the Philippines. She thinks that the Philippines seemed to be a more ‘foreign’ place for their daughter because they had to use English when communicating.

Children’s perceptions and ideas of Chinese language is formed initially within this closed language use community. In this process, they form and reconstruct their understandings about the Chinese language. They might regard Chinese as an important and necessary language because it is the main and sometimes the only language for communication. Some children may be curious about why people around them have different language preferences,

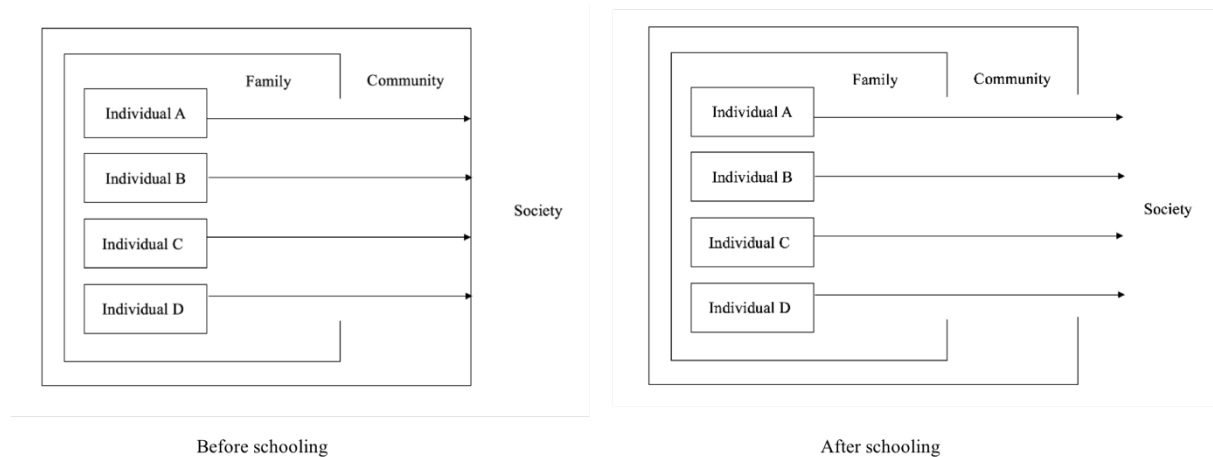
such as English, Italian or any other languages. Either their endorsement or their doubt about the Chinese language could not be verified in this stage.

However, this closed community for language use is broken with these children's steps into primary school and increasing interactions with peers speaking English. Once this closed space is broken, more information about language use will be provided for children to re-examine their perception. Their verification process will be discussed in the following section.

In Australia, the Chinese community, as well as other ethnic minority communities, co-exist in parallel, which creates the language environment for the maintenance and development of immigrant children. Applying the experience of Chinese immigrant children's language use to other multicultural and multilingual environments, minority communities co-exist in parallel with the mainstream society in spite of their balanced or unbalanced powers on immigrant children's construction of language ideology. The co-existing communities are mutually closed to each other for immigrant children from different ethnic backgrounds before they attend primary school, and before they gradually have chances to interact with other community members. Within each ethnic community, immigrant children use their heritage language. However, after they start interacting with other community members, which is new to them, their shift of language preference serves as a key to break the barriers and open the doors of different communities, and helps children themselves enter the broad society smoothly. The trajectory of immigrant children's language use expands from the ethnic community to the broad society. The closeness and openness of the language use space could be illustrated in the following figures.

The Figure 6.1 is drawn based on interviews and observations. As the first sub-figure of Figure 6.1 illustrates, family members as individuals, including immigrant children, parents,

siblings and grandparents, live in the same space in a family environment. Before being involved in socialising, these children are influenced by family in the narrow scope and by the Chinese community in the broad scope. The door between the Chinese community and the society is closed, which means the space for these children's language use in this stage is limited to the Chinese community. Therefore, the Chinese language is their mainly used language before they become involved in schooling and socialising.



**Figure 6.1 A closed community against a gradually open space for language use**

*Source: Proposed by the researcher based on the fieldwork conducted in multiple schools.*

However, as the second sub-figure of Figure 6.1 shows, when children attend primary school and begin to socialise with peers speaking other languages, the door to the society for use of diverse languages is gradually opened. With their wider contacts with people outside Chinese communities, which is also a broad space for their dual language use, they have many more opportunities to develop and practise their bilingual skills, especially their English language skills. In this gradually open process, children tend to verify their language ideologies through their cultural use of dual languages, which will be discussed in the following section. However, the possibilities to verify the authenticity of the language ideologies and to reconstruct them are provided by the openness of space for language use.

### 6.3.2 Verification from closeness to openness

The above section discusses the closeness and the openness of the space of language use, which provides the possibilities for children's reflexivity of their language ideologies' construction. The closeness associated with immigrant issues has been explored in the field of immigration policy. Ruh (2013) proposed openness and rights indicators to illustrate the relationship between immigration policies and immigrants' rights. Applying Ruh's theory, many studies associated with this immigration issue probe into whether the immigration policy of certain immigration countries is closed or not, and what influence their policy has on the immigration society. For example, Kominé (2018) finds that there are contradictions between the skilled-economic-migrants-oriented intake policy and the reality of the openness towards low-skilled economic migrants. However, few of the studies use the concept of openness in the analysis of the language space for immigrant children to discuss their reflexivity on language ideologies in this opening process.

The reflexivity is embodied dominantly in how these children handle the conflicts between their language imagination and realities. Transnational immigrant children's language imagination is their ability to feel and guess the meaning of being able to speak a language and an outcome of their ideas and thoughts of a language. Immigrant children form some vague and simple ideas about the language they use before their language space opens from within the community and family to the wider society. Before socialising with others, family members are the people that children mainly are in contact with, so family members are the main information source and information provider that children can depend on to estimate the usefulness of languages and to form their perception of languages. However, after they interact with people other than family members, more information on the realities of being able to speak and use a language is provided to children, which might influence their judgement of the language and their use of it. In this process, children form their own

understandings, and these keep changing when more information is added. Also, in this process the conflicts between language imagination and reality emerge.

Considering the complicated environment and family composition of immigrant children, the significance of contradictions between their language imagination and reality varies. For some children, these kinds of contradictions are not significant. In this case, the children's language ideologies tend to be consistent over time. Many Chinese-Australian children were taught that Chinese is useful, some in the setting of communicating with family members, some in the aspect of developing bilingual skills. When some of these Chinese immigrant children grow up they find that being able to speak Chinese language indeed brings some benefits to them, which means the reality that they see conforms to what they have imagined and expected, so they tend to continue their learning and use of Chinese language.

However, interviews have raised another issue that if Chinese is not as useful or important as described by the information they received, which means that conflicts between language imagination and reality emerge, the children tend to become reluctant to keep up their learning and use of the Chinese language. For example, the contradictions between language imagination and reality inhibit Interviewee 112 (7; F; 10 November 2017)'s learning of Chinese. Interviewee 112 was a Year 2 girl who was born in Australia, with both of her parents coming from Tianjin. She was told that learning Chinese language is necessary and important because almost every other peer learns Chinese. This indeed happens before children's schooling, because many Chinese parents send their children to learn Chinese in preschool classes. Children in this stage have few friends except buddies in the Chinese community. However, since Interviewee 112 does not live with her grandparents and most people she knows since attending primary school speak English, she does not find Chinese as useful as she was told. 'Many of my buddies cannot speak Chinese and do not learn Chinese,

and they live well', she said. Chinese children experiencing this tend to refuse to keep learning and using Chinese. This type of difference between children's imagination and reality about a particular language has significant influence in forming their understanding of language.

The analysis of empirical evidence suggests that transnational children tend to verify the coherence between their language imagination and reality via the possibility provided by openness of language space. Their language ideology forms, and changes. The language ideology formed under this influence serves, in return, as a covert power when children make a language choice. What children experience before and after attending primary school also influences the construction of their language ideology.

#### **6.4 The typology of conflicting but reflexive language ideologies**

Under the influence of a dynamic dual-track socio-cultural environment and the conflicting language ideologies and practices within family, children form their own understanding about language. The data drawn from observations and interviews indicate that Chinese-Australian children have mutually conflicting perceptions of the Chinese and English languages.

Immersed into a dual-track cultural environment, these children keep reshaping their perceptions of language according to changes in external conditions and the development of self-cognition. However, though they grow up in a similar cultural environment and in the same era, due to the different family conditions, personal experiences and individual perception of the changing environment, children's language ideologies vary. According to their various understandings about language and language-use behaviours guided by language perceptions, this section tries to classify the children into several language cognitional groups: positive users, blind followers, negative maintainers and stiff resisters. This section is followed by an analysis of the characteristics of these children's language ideology.

### 6.4.1 Positive users

The usefulness of learning, using and maintaining the Chinese heritage language, such as to develop bilingual skills, to communicate, to socialise, has been documented and analysed in the existing literature. Some children are positively motivated to learn and use Chinese, because of their motivations to foster the language-learning interest, to keep the ability to communicate with family members, to develop their competitive capacity, or to maintain their cultural tie with their Chinese origin. According to the fieldwork, almost all classrooms are filled with some active users of the Chinese language.

This positive group of children tend to be strongly motivated by internal or external factors, and usually have a positive perspective about the usefulness of Chinese in the future.

Therefore, they are engaged in learning Chinese through schooling and maintaining their Chinese language skills via daily use. An important indicator of this group of children is that they are reluctant to be participatory learners. Rather, they are fully involved in the Chinese language learning and using process and expect to gain benefits from being able to speak Chinese.

A representative case I consider here is a Shanghai family with two Australian-born sons aged 22 and 11. The elder brother studied medicine at the University of Melbourne. He is fluent in speaking Chinese and always travels back to China alone. Taking his older brother as a model, the younger son learned the Chinese language in Year 6 at an elite class in Xin Jinshan School. They speak mixed English, Mandarin and Shanghainese at home.

I interviewed their mother, Interviewee 74 (42; F; 19 August 2017), and conducted class observation in the younger son's classroom for several weeks. He was always found to sit in the front rows in the classroom and to have frequent and positive responses to the content delivered in the class. According to Interviewee 74, since the elder brother obtained a score

of 53 after scaling, which is an extremely high score in the Chinese subject in VCE, he set a good example to his younger brother. The younger son was learning the Chinese language carefully, with a positive attitude. Interviewee 74 added:

I think learning Chinese is very important. I send my children to the elite class in the Chinese community school and hope they could be fluent bilinguals in the future. Try your best to learn it or give it up! We do not prefer to learn as a participant.

(Interviewee 74, 42; F; 19 August 2017)

#### **6.4.2 Blind followers**

The blind followers, to some extent, are the participatory learners, as Interviewee 74 said. Children who learn Chinese blindly are also a large group. This group of young Chinese learners and users do not have an explicit motivation and sophisticated mature understanding about learning Chinese language. Many children belonging to this group are sent to learn the Chinese language by their parents, but they do not present explicit unwillingness or resistance to learn. They learn because others learn. They use Chinese language because others use it. They take a wait-and-see attitude towards Chinese language learning and using.

Chinese adult migrants who migrated to Australia were momentarily uprooted from the cultural and language environment they were familiar with, and thus they may have a strong feeling of unsafety in their new socio-cultural environment, and a feeling of uncertainty for the future. Under this circumstance, they imitate what others do in regard to children's educational issues. Influenced by their parents, many children, especially those in low grades who are too immature to form an independent perception of the language – as well as to understand the meaning of being able to speak Chinese – learn and use it because of the instinct of peer imitation and the willingness for risk reduction.

According to the class observation, this group of children always attend the class on time, but their learning attitude is rather indifferent. Few of them have sufficient interaction with their Chinese teacher and they switch to English once the class is over. They usually do not have strong motivation to speak Chinese fluently or to obtain a high score in the exam. This phenomenon is quite common in Chinese heritage language learners and could be observed among all age groups. Interviewee 15 (33; F; 25 March 2017), who has a Year 1 New Zealand-born son and migrated to Australia several years ago, said, ‘my child takes learning Chinese for granted because all his Chinese friends learn Chinese’. Interviewee 32 (12; F; 3 June 2017) is a Year 8 girl, and she stated that, ‘China is everywhere and many friends around me learn Chinese, so I learn Chinese’.

### **6.4.3 Negative maintainers**

Negative maintainers are children who learn the Chinese language with a negative attitude and they just want to maintain their Chinese skills rather than develop them. According to participant observations and interviews, though this group of children sit in the classroom and seemingly learn Chinese, they actually cannot concentrate on the class content, in most situations. This is partly because they do not have a clear understanding and it is not their own decision to learn Chinese language, what they can do is not strongly resist coming to school.

Compared with positive users and blind followers, negative Chinese maintainers learn the language under the influence of their parents or peer pressure. They are not self-motivated to learn and to use Chinese. Some Chinese language learners, especially children in their early childhood, are in some sense ‘forced’ to learn and use Chinese. For example, in one family both mother and father are Chinese Singaporeans, and they have an Australian-born son aged eight. The father has a strong interest in Chinese and kept learning the Chinese language until

he graduated from high school when he was in Singapore. However, according to him, his son is reluctant to learn and use Chinese. He indicated:

He felt speaking Chinese was a really difficult thing when he was sent to learn Chinese in Year 1 class, because we spoke English mostly in daily conversation before his schooling. However, I will help him understand the importance of being able to speak Chinese and will keep sending him to learn it until graduation from high school.

(Interviewee 19, 37; M; 6 May 2017)

This phenomenon also occurs in middle-to-high-grade classes. Interviewee 115 (32; F; 17 November 2018), a teacher of a Year 8 class, expressed that parents of children in her class did not even expect that their children could learn something from the class, and they just wanted to keep the Chinese language environment for their children, even for only several hours during weekends. In such cases, it is not difficult to imagine that the children with such psychological status just maintain their Chinese language skills and are unwilling to develop their bilingual skills positively.

#### **6.4.4 Stiff resisters**

The least positive Chinese learners are resisters. Actually, this group of children have given up learning the Chinese language and refuse to pick it up. Most children of Chinese backgrounds are able to listen, understand and speak the Chinese language more or less because of their dual-track living environment, or at least they could understand Chinese to some extent. However, they could not be regarded as ‘learners’ in a strict sense. In such cases, Chinese is only acquired subconsciously by these children, rather than learnt consciously. Their own attitude become visible once their parents decide to send them to Chinese language school.

The reasons that lead them to give up learning and using Chinese are complicated. Some of them give up because their parents do not regard learning Chinese as a serious matter. Some because they find it too difficult to catch up when they enter the intermediate level. Some give up because they have been influenced by various negative comments on Chinese and Chineseness or glorification of anything Western, which has been not uncommon among Chinese population. No matter for what reason, this result is led by their continuously reflecting on the changing society and self-examination.

#### **6.4.5 The characteristics of children's language ideology**

The typology discussed above is mostly based on many rounds of interviews and months of participant observation on children's opinions and behaviours about Chinese language use, which is via a kind of self-classification approach. One's opinion about and behaviour in using a particular language are the forms of one's language ideology. Following is a brief analysis of what characteristics these children have during their language ideology formation process, which mainly refers to: 1) reflexive; 2) mutually overlapped and transformable; 3) heterogeneous and dynamic.

##### **6.4.5.1 Reflexive**

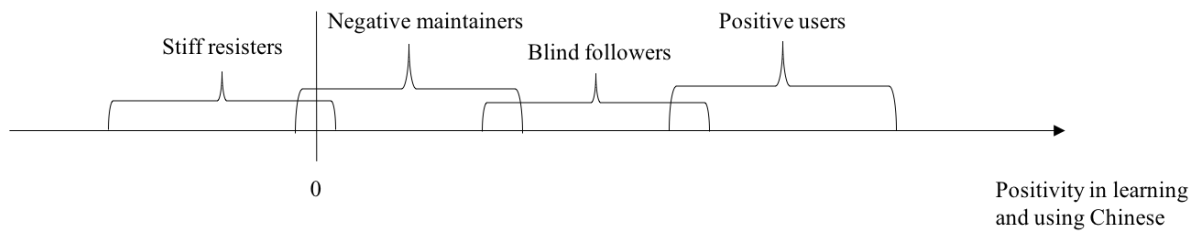
Reflexivity refers to the relationships between cause and effect and, especially in sociology, it refers to humans' agency in identifying the social changes and situating themselves in the continuously changing social structure. It emphasises the circular relationships between human beliefs and social changes. As a social theory, reflexivity has been applied broadly in the fields of sociology, economics and anthropology. Though only very few studies involve self-reflexive inquiry as an approach to analyse language use (Banes, Martinez, Athanases, & Wong, 2016), those that do fail to provide a systematic and comprehensive analysis into the reflexivity of language ideologies of immigrant children in the dual-track language

environment where their heritage language and the mainstream language are well matched. There is almost no literature using this self-examining, self-developing and self-fostering way to analyse language ideologies' construction, especially in the case of immigrant children, who are influenced by conflicting cultures and languages more significantly than others.

However, as discussed above, in the dual-track language environment, Chinese-Australian children are active agents in constructing and reconstructing their perceptions about language according to the external socio-cultural environment, which in turn configures their language environment. Rather than being influenced by external cultural factors and forming a similar language ideology, these children have a high level of reflexivity, which makes them have different perceptions and attitudes towards the Chinese and English languages. It is also because of their reflexivity that the external cultural environment and the circumstances within the family keep changing. During this reflexive process, children who live in a similar cultural environment but have different learning experiences and levels of cognitive development form their own understanding of languages.

#### **6.4.5.2 Mutually-overlapped and transformable**

Generally, the typology introduced above considers the extent of Chinese-Australian children's positivity in learning and using the Chinese language. As Figure 6.2 indicates, positive users, blind followers and negative maintainers are on the right side of the corroborated axis, with only resisters situated on the left side. The positivity values of positive users, blind followers and negative maintainers are positive, while they decrease successively. In contrast, the resisters have almost no positivity in learning and using the Chinese language at all. Each group may have an overlap with the adjacent group.



**Figure 6.2 Chinese-Australian children's positivity in learning and using Chinese**

*Source: Conceptual scheme proposed by the researcher based on the fieldwork conducted in multiple schools.*

Though this typology is an explicit classification, when applying to the specific case of Chinese-Australian children, and in the broad situation applying to other transnational immigrant children, it may be difficult to pinpoint the type of language user that children are. However, this typology of transnational immigrant children's language ideology could provide insight into understanding what probable behaviours they may have under the covert influence of language ideology, and why they tackle language use with conflicting attitudes. Considering the variable environment and the complexity of transnational immigrant children, their language ideology and attitude are subjective and transformable from one type to another.

#### **6.4.5.3 Heterogeneous and dynamic**

Though I provide a general typology of children's ideas and understanding about language in the above section, children could not, in some situations, be easily classified into any of the groups. This is because they are still in the process of socialisation and maturing and they might have features of language use belonging to more than one group of language speakers. The Chinese young speakers are classified into four types, not to differentiate them but to help us understand that they may have reflexive perceptions, and under the influence of the

reflexivity they have different attitudes towards the Chinese language, which is characterised as heterogenisation.

The characteristic of heterogenisation could be also embodied as dynamic. Though children usually belong to one group of language users in a certain period, they might present characteristics of other groups over time and as their language ideologies develop. Language ideologies of children, especially immigrant children, should be understood from a dynamic perspective. Children who do not value Chinese learning at an early age may change their perception during their growing up; on the other hand, children who learn the Chinese language positively during their childhood may also experience attrition of their language skills over time. Because of their reflexivity, their perceptions of language are formed and keep being reconstructed.

A good example is from Interviewee 84 (46; F; 2 September 2017), who has a son who has graduated from university and currently is a specialist. According to Interviewee 84, learning Chinese was a drudgery for her son when he was young, and he only learnt it for two years. In the VCE exam he even chose Japanese language as a subject rather than Chinese. However, he now feels deeply regretful that he cannot speak Chinese. ‘He said once that though I have many patients now, if I could speak Chinese, I could offer medical treatment to more Chinese people’, Interviewee 84 said. From this case, we could easily understand that Chinese-Australian children’s language ideology may change radically over time.

## **6.5 Summary**

The present chapter analyses the perceptions of school-aged Chinese Australians of the Chinese language, examining after learning and using Chinese, which have been discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, how these children perceive Chinese and form their reflexive language

ideology. This is vitally important for understanding these children's cultural identity, which will be discussed in the following chapter.

Specifically, this chapter begins with an introduction of language ideologies, and contextualises this issue in the Chinese community in Australia. Based on the data obtained from fieldwork, this chapter then examines the macro- and micro-environments in which Chinese children form their perceptions and understanding of language. This includes the longitudinally dynamic and transversely dual-track cultural environment at the macro level and the contradictory language ideologies and practices within family at the micro level.

This chapter then analyses their understandings of languages from the personal level, discussing how children themselves construct their perceptions according to the environment and their self-reflexivity. Applying the concepts of openness and closeness, this research captures the characteristic of these children's language space, which is gradual openness, and proposes that in the gradually open language community, these children verify their language imagination with the reality. The conflicts between language imagination and reality have significant influence on their perception and practices of Chinese language.

From the typological perspective, the last section classifies children's language ideology and their practices of Chinese language into four types: positive users, blind followers, negative maintainers and stiff resisters. This typology is based on the extent of these children's positivity in learning and using Chinese. This section also considers the characteristics of this typology, including reflexive, mutually overlapped and transformable, as well as heterogeneous and dynamic.

In sum, this chapter analyses children's conflicting but reflexive language ideologies of the Chinese language. The research findings in this chapter not only respond to the theoretical debates revolving around language ideology and transnationality of immigrant children, but

also provide some empirical evidence to support the arguments. This chapter emphasises children's agency in forming and reconfiguring their perceptions of language, and provides some innovative analytical perspectives to explore this issue, including a typological perspective, a dual-track perspective and a spatial perspective.

## **Chapter 7 Chinese Language's Role in Multiple Dimensions of Cultural Identity**

This chapter is extended as a logical succession of the argument in the whole thesis which discusses the Chinese language use by school-aged Chinese Australians and this chapter focuses on what role that language plays in their cultural identity. As the first discussion chapter, Chapter 3 identified the motives behind school-aged Chinese Australians' learning and using behaviours, with Chapters 4 and 5 explicating their learning behaviours from the formal and casual methods, which refers to schooling-receiving and causal-acquisition process. How these children perceive Chinese language is formed in this process, with the influence from the dual-track cultural environment, which has been explored in Chapter 6. Chapter 7, as the final discussion chapter, makes clear how their learning behaviours, cultural use, and attitudes towards the Chinese language influence these children and adolescents' cultural identity in multiple dimensions.

This chapter begins by reviewing what influence the language does have on identity formation and reconstruction processes and clarifying that identity issues should be discussed in multiple dimensions rather than one simple layer. Taking the multidimensionality of identity into consideration, this chapter then probes what role Chinese heritage language plays in multiple dimensions of identity, including self-identification, observed identity and reflected identity. This is followed by a third discussion section, which addresses the fluidity and hybridity of these adolescents' cultural identity within and across boundaries of dimensions. The fourth section diversifies the factors shaping their cultural and ethnic identity, analysing what other factors co-work in this process. Following that, this last discussion chapter finishes with its conclusion.

This research believes that apart from being one of the characteristics of interaction-based observed identity, Chinese language also plays an important role in the formation of Chinese-Australian children and adolescents' identity in multiple dimensions. This role mainly is as a covert influential mediation, rather than a determinative factor, in children's negotiation between their dual-cultural and highly fluid identities. In addition, the identity embodied in one dimension of the complicated identity hierarchical system may be cross-dimensionally inconsistent with identities of the other dimensions.

## **7.1 Introduction**

The 2016 Australian Census reveals that over 1.2 million people in the country claim their Chinese ancestry (ABS, 2018). Among them, people who regard Mandarin and Cantonese as the most preferred language to speak at home are 46% and 22% respectively, which jointly contribute to the prevalence of Chinese language use in the Chinese community in Australia. The significant number of people claiming their Chinese ancestry and the high frequency of use of Chinese languages draw our attention to thinking about relations between Chinese as a heritage language and Chinese immigrants' ethnic identity, especially school-aged Chinese Australians' ethnic and cultural identity.

This section first critically and briefly explores language–identity relations in the scope of immigration studies. By contextualising language–identity relations into the Chinese community in Australia, this section then tends to pinpoint research problems in studies of heritage language and ethnic identity that this chapter probes to fill in and answer. It also calls for attention to situating analyses related to ethnic studies into a systematic framework, which refers to the multidimensional ethnic identity (Roth, 2016). Third, this section examines the possible inconsistencies and negotiations among the roles that heritage language plays among various dimensions.

The concept of ethnic and cultural identity is fundamental to understanding issues associated with the culturalisation process in the ever multilingual and multicultural society. Within the ethnic studies, attention has been given to health fields (Bratter & Gorman, 2011), criminal justice outcomes (Penner & Saperstein, 2015), nation-building (Brett, 2011; Moran, 2011) and others. However, within the research scope of language–identity relations—especially the relationship between heritage language and immigrants' ethnic identity—many studies either focused on one dimension of ethnic identity or could not distinguish dimensions of identity well, which is not systematic and comprehensive for us to understand the language–identity issues. Identifying language–identity relations in multiple dimensions is particularly important in migration studies, since immigrants are highly likely to have inconsistent identities in different dimensions due to their mobility and multi-track culturalisation (Borland, 2005).

Within the literature on language-identity relations, there are mainly two lines of research. One line of the literature focused on identity construction through second language in intra-nation migration (Dong & Blommaert, 2009; Gu, 2010; Woolard, 2013; Guo & Gu, 2018). For example, Guo and Gu (2016) explored how Uyghur minority students who migrated to a prestigious east-coast university in China constructed their identities through English language learning experiences and what problems these intra-nation, but culturally diversified, migrant students were confronted with. These studies shed light on the minority groups' negotiation of ethnic identity within geographical boundaries. Another line of research has examined language–ethnic identity relations among migrants crossing national boundaries, from multiple perspectives. From a historical perspective, Krawatzek and Sasse (2019) have explored how German immigrants in the United States reflect upon their transnational identity with reference to their language practice. From the perspective of student mobility and acculturation, some studies have looked at the ways in which

international students, who are regarded as temporary immigrants, construct their identities in a non-native-language-speaking environment (Duff, 2002; Fotovatian, 2012). For example, Fotovatian (2012) profiled international non-English-speaking-background PhD students in an Australian university and analysed how they chose different pathways in the process of institutional interactions and identity construction.

Within the research focusing on international immigrants, the emerging body of studies exploring the role of language in immigrants' identity construction process has demonstrated that the ability in and the use of heritage language are key factors related to ethnic identity construction. In these studies, language is regarded as a passport to various views of ethnic identities, including the cultural belonging to a mother culture (Sakamoto, 2000; Schecter & Bayley, 2002) or a target culture (Sung, 2019), a bicultural identity (Comănaru, Noels, & Dewaele, 2018), a glocalised identity (Tong & Cheung, 2011), and a cosmopolitan identity (Guardado, 2010; Wang, 2016a; Wang & Collins, 2016a). These studies are important in understanding issues of language and identity, which indicate the possibilities that language as a passport or a key could bring immigrants to in the ever faster and ever more frequently happening human mobilities.

However, there are some problems in the existing studies. A serious one is that some studies failed to identify which dimension of ethnic identity they focused on. Specifically, they did not identify which dimension of identity heritage language did have influence on (Borland, 2005). These studies analysed the relationship between language and ethnic identity from different perspectives, but ignored the most important point, which is to clarify which dimension of identity—self-perception or social perception, for example—they were discussing. Another research gap is that though many research findings indicated implicitly that the self-classification dimension of ethnic and cultural identity was their research

emphasis, they did not mention the possible existence of other layers of identity, which failed to situate their studies into a systematic and complete theoretical framework of ethnic identity. Without the consideration of the probable existence and impacts of other dimensions of ethnic identity, we could not obtain the comprehensive understanding of ethnic issues and language–identity issues.

All the above-mentioned research gaps are due to a lack of awareness of admitting the existence of multiple dimensions of identity and distinguishing them. The research outcomes led by this analytical approach are also implicit and incomprehensive. The current chapter applies the multidimensional perspective to discuss the relation between Chinese as a heritage language and school-aged Chinese Australians' ethnic identity construction. Applying this perspective is not only with the purpose to systematically analyse this issue, but also due to the following reasons. First, a single dimension of identity is unreliable for assessing one's identity. It is not always clear which dimension or which dimensions will best explain the ethnic issues. For example, the reliability of self-classification is challenged by researchers (Telles, 2014). Telles argued that self-identification was less reliable for assessing racial inequality than classification by others.

Another reason is that a multidimensional perspective provides us with the insight for considering the possible fluidity and mutual impacts happening among identities of different dimensions (Porter, Liebler, & Noon, 2016). Though the frequency and possibility of identity shifts have been analysed in many studies (Kim, 2003), they only analysed identity shifts from one ethnicity to another, mostly in the dimension of self-identification, rather than the probable impact and fluidity in multiple dimensions of an individual's ethnic identity. No matter which dimension of identity researchers focus on, few studies about language and identity issues could identify links and interactions between different dimensions of identity.

However, identity in one dimension actually works on the other dimensions. For example, via the language you speak or the accent and speaking manners you have when you speak, the ethnic identity that others believe you to be, and the ethnic identity that you believe others assume you to be, influence how you identify yourself, and vice versa. Roth (2016) believed that 'each dimension of race is fluid, and this can lead to a lack of clarity in the broader literature between fluidity within one dimension and inconsistency between different dimensions' (p. 1329).

Furthermore, the existing literature failed to point out the possible inconsistency among various dimensions of identity, and the interplay among them, which also ignored different roles that heritage language plays in these dimensions. Without the consideration of the existence of inconsistency among different dimensions, research findings tend to misdirect us to believe that one dimension could generalise and represent one's authentic ethnic identity, which is not a complete understanding.

Especially in issues discussing language–identity relations, language plays different roles in different dimensions of identity, which is neglected in the existing literature. In the process of identity construction for immigrant children and adolescents, what role the heritage language plays in the push-pull process towards their heritage identity has not been explicated. This research, therefore, calls for attention to situate the discussion of language–identity relations into a theoretical structure that takes multiple dimensions and layers of ethnic identity into consideration. This research suggests that any topics associated with ethnic identity should make clear in the beginning which dimension of ethnicity they focus on.

Considering the limit of pages and the focus of this thesis, this chapter looks at what role heritage language plays in the process of the children and adolescents' identity construction in three mostly related dimensions, and the interplay among identities of these dimensions.

Based on the data obtained from the solid fieldwork conducted in multiple schools, this chapter provides a relatively systematic analysis of roles that heritage language plays in identity construction and the reconfiguration process from a multidimensional perspective, namely self-identification, observed identity and reflected identity, with insights on the interplay among identities of different dimensions in this process and the possible factors that co-work with heritage language in this process.

## **7.2 Chinese language and multidimensional ethnic identity**

With demographic changes, including immigration, more and more Australians experience conflicts and negotiations among multiple dimensions of ethnic and cultural identity.

Especially for school-aged immigrant children and adolescents, who are in the important stage for cognitive development and identity formation, how they construct and reconstruct their identity via language use is vitally important but under-researched.

Data obtained via multiple methods and from multiple schools indicates that Chinese language plays different roles in multiple dimensions of the children and adolescents' identity. However, this important and emerging feature has not been reflected in the current scholarship. Admittedly, language could not have an influence in all dimensions of identity. Identity in dimensions of genetic ethnic ancestry and phenotype could not be influenced easily by language ability and language use. However, language indeed has an influence on multiple dimensions of identity construction in some dimensions.

This section focuses on three dimensions of identity, namely self-identification, observed identity, and reflected identity. These three dimensions of identity were chosen because, according to empirical data, language has a most significant influence on these aspects of identity formation. This does not mean that language has no impact on the other dimensions of ethnic identity. Specifically, this section first looks at how these children and adolescents

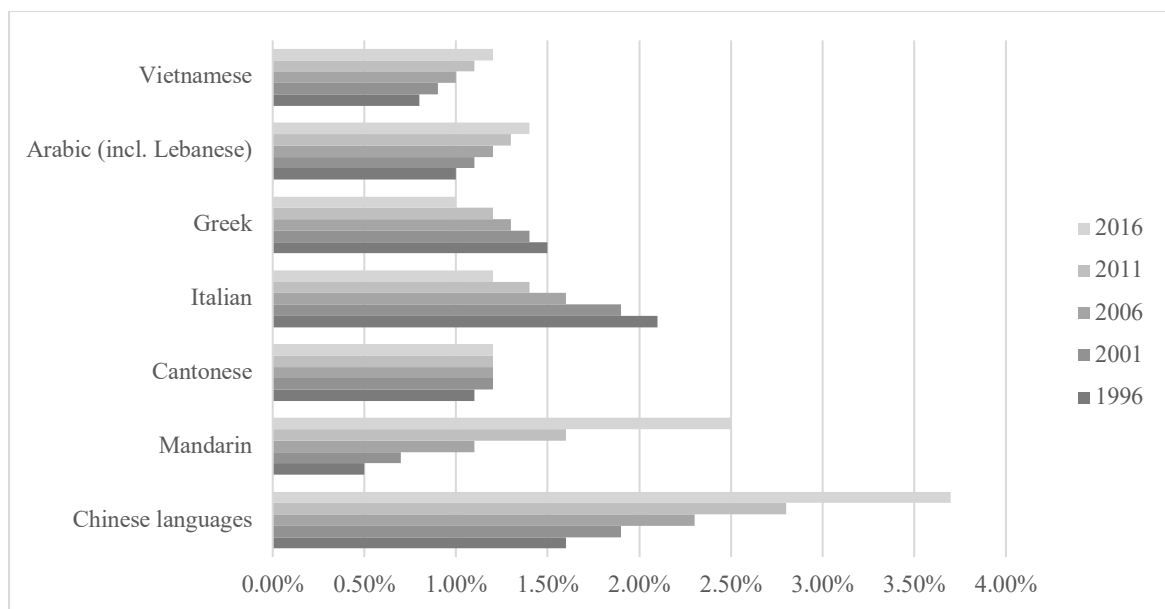
perceive themselves via their ability and use of the Chinese language, which refers to the dimension of self-identification. Second, how others perceive these children and adolescents according to their communicative interactions with them is examined from the perspective of observed identity. This section then analyses the dimension of reflected identity, probing how they believe others assume them to be, via their Chinese language use. Instead of reaching a conclusion regarding the outcome of their ethnic and cultural identity, this chapter aims to explain the diverse existences of identity and the possible inconsistency among different dimensions under the influence of Chinese heritage language use.

### **7.2.1 Chinese language as a switch in the process of self-identification**

Based on evidence obtained from fieldwork, self-identification of ethnicity includes both open-ended and closed-ended classification of one's ethnic identity. Open-ended self-identification usually refers to individual's subjective perspective of own ethnic identity and 'it is not limited by a set of pre-determined options and does not represent a person's efforts to fit themselves into any given set of boxes' (Roth, 2016, p. 1313). Closed-ended self-identification is checked and selected from the list provided by official form or survey—a census for example—which is less flexible but more visible. To make the statistics of ethnicities accurate, Australian Bureau of Statistics (2016) has changed the layout of the ancestry question in the Census since 2016, with two distinct areas for people to write an ancestry rather than picking from the list. This increases the accuracy and flexibility in categorising Australians with diverse ethnicities.

From the analysis of the data, including data from Australian census reports and that obtained from fieldwork, this chapter indicates that Chinese language plays a significant role in influencing children and adolescents' self-identification of their ethnic identities in both closed-ended and open-ended perspectives. In the closed-ended Census, the number of people

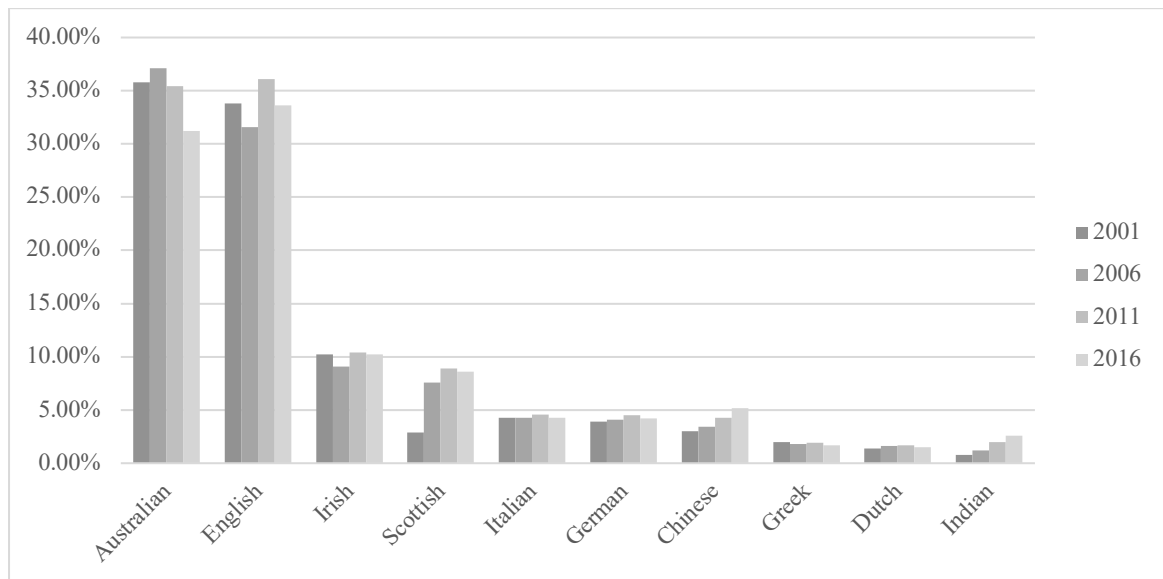
speaking Chinese at home is positively correlated with the number of Australians claiming their Chinese ethnicity. In the 2006 Census, Mandarin was indicated as the fifth most spoken language at home (1.1%), behind Cantonese ranked third (1.2%). The 2011 Census saw the significant rise of Mandarin-speaking population to be the top home language other than English, at 1.6%, and this figure increased notably in 2016 to 2.5%. Meanwhile, since 2000 the number of Australians claiming their Chinese ancestry has experienced a similar growing trend, increasing at a fast rate from 3% in the 2001 Census to 5.2% in the 2016 Census. This is coherent with the trend of increasing numbers of people speaking Mandarin and Cantonese at home, which increased from 1.6% in 1996 to 3.7% in 2016. Specific figures for languages spoken by a person at home and Australians' ancestry are given in Figures 7.1 and 7.2. The consistency of increases in people speaking Chinese languages at home and in people claiming their Chineseness indicates that use of Chinese heritage language influences immigrants' self-perception on ethnicity.



**Figure 7.1 Language spoken by a person at home in Australia, 1996–2016<sup>17</sup>**

<sup>17</sup> The number of people speaking 'Chinese languages' in Figure 7.1 refers to the sum of people speaking Mandarin and Cantonese. This excludes speakers of a few small Chinese dialects, such as Teochew.

Source: Compiled by the author based on Australian Censuses 1996–2016



**Figure 7.2 Top ancestry groups in Australia, 2001–2016**

Source: Compiled by the author based on Australian Censuses 2001–2016

In the open-ended interviews and observations, the children and adolescents in the research group tended to approach their Chineseness via Chinese language learning and using. A new phenomenon associated with their self-identification has emerged in this process. This phenomenon is that through learning and using the Chinese language, they approach Chinese mainstream oriented rather than with a region-based Chinese cultural identity. Specifically, children and adolescents who speak Mandarin regard themselves as Chinese or half-Chinese—following the broad sense of Chinese people—rather than region-based identity, such as Cantonese or Fujianese. This is different from a couple of decades ago when fragmented regional identities were placed upon them. Being able to speak and use Chinese language acts as a kind of switch that helps them feel psychologically close to Chinese culture and keep their feel of Chineseness.

When asked questions associated with cultural identity, the two key variables that children and adolescents may take into consideration are where they were born and grow up, and what they believe their racial ancestry to be, based primarily on family history. In this research, they were born in Australia or moved to Australia at a very early age, which led them to self-identify themselves as Australians. Meanwhile, the origin of their family makes Chineseness an important ethnicity that they should consider.

People usually know only a few generations of their family and are unaware of all the ethnic ancestry they have. However, this issue is not as important for them because according to the current Chinese understanding of identity, they have mainstream-oriented identity rather than with a region-based self-perception. According to empirical evidence collected from the fieldwork, they knew which part of China their parents come from, but they didn't take it as an important variable when self-assessing their ethnic and cultural identity. The most important thing was whether they had and acknowledged their cultural attachment to Chinese identity. In the process of their construction of ethnic identity, learning and using Chinese language, and thus having the ability to speak it, helped bring them to the track of Chinese ethnicity, and this mainly refers to the mainstream Chinese culture in the broad sense, rather than the regional identity in a narrow sense.

Among 45 valid responses associated with the topic language and ethnic identity, including responses from children and adolescents themselves and Chinese parents, all of the children and adolescents learnt Mandarin in Chinese community school or in LOTE class in day school. Eight children spoke Chinese dialects, including Cantonese, Hakka or Shanghainese, at home—despite this mainly happening in communications with senior family members—while 37 of them spoke only Mandarin at home, no matter who they communicated with. Mandarin is seen as a lingua franca in the Chinese community in Australia and being able to

speaking Mandarin is an ability that almost every family with Chinese background expects their children to have. Children are sent to Chinese community school or choose a Chinese subject in their LOTE class to learn Mandarin. In contrast, they only acquire, which is a kind of casual learning behaviour, some Chinese dialects through their immersion and daily interaction with their family members rather than learn it systematically in a class-based environment. Among the same group of children and adolescents, when asked 'Where are you from?', 25 of 32 children gave the answer of their self-perception, related with 'Chinese ethnicity'. Their answers included 'Chinese Australian', 'half Chinese and half Australian', 'ABC (Australia-born Chinese)'. Only five regarded themselves as, and only as, 'Australian'.

For example, when asked 'Where are you from?', Interviewee 7 (7; M; 13 May 2017) said, 'I have two homes. One in China and one in Australia'. Interviewee 7 is a Year 3 boy learning Chinese at Chinese community school, with his parents from Ningbo, Zhejiang Province in China. When asked about Chinese language learning, Interviewee 7 said, 'I feel I am a Chinese when speaking Chinese and an Australian when speaking English'. Language here acts as a self-controlling switch, helping children closed to the corresponding culture and temporarily far away from the other language they speak.

The above discussion is in the dimension of self-identification, in which children either form or identify their perceptions about who they are through their language choice and language use. The change of these children's self-identified ethnic inclination from region-based subculture to mainstream Chinese culture is led jointly by the changing population composition in the Chinese migrant community and the corresponding changing cultural environment in Australia, which is discussed further in the following paragraphs.

First, the origin of Chinese immigrants has been changing significantly, from several southern provinces in China to the whole mainland. A few decades ago, when many of the

immigrants were from Guangdong Province, Fujian Province or some south-east Asian countries, some southern Chinese dialects, such as Cantonese or Hakka, were most frequently spoken languages in the Chinese community in Australia. The ability to speak Chinese dialects, especially Cantonese, used to be required if Chinese immigrants wanted to run a successful business. As Figure 7.1 indicates, among languages other than English spoken at home, Cantonese was the third most spoken language from 1996 to 2006, with about 1.2% of Australians speaking Cantonese at home, only following the numbers of people speaking Italian and Greek. However, 2011 was a turning point for Chinese languages spoken at home, just a decade after the resumption of direct immigration from China. The 2011 Census data shows that Mandarin exceeded Italian, Arabic, Cantonese and Greek, to be the mostly widely spoken language at home, with 1.6% of Australians using Mandarin at home. This figure increased further to 2.5% in 2016, which more than doubled the figure of Cantonese at 1.2%.

Second, since language is often coterminous with ethnic identity, or in the words of 'languages are among the most powerful symbols of ethnic identity' (Ruzza, 2000, p. 168), being able to speak a language or not is an important factor for the children and adolescents to self-identify what kind of people they are. The acts of language use are therefore considered to be these children and adolescents' cultural manifestations within the Chinese community. Interestingly, Chinese dialect is also coterminous with regional culture in China, while Mandarin conveys the cultural implications of the entity among diverse cultures in China, which is the Chinese culture in broad sense. Compared with 30 or so years ago, when dialects were more prevalent than Mandarin in the Chinese community in Australia, the most recent decade has been witnessing the rapid growth in Mandarin-speaking population in the Chinese community, which not only represents the change of origins of Chinese migrants, but also reconfigures the language environment for Chinese-Australian children and adolescents. This is ultimately an outcome of many fundamental changes taking place within China,

where many dialects have been erased by its rapid modernisation process. In the new language and culture environment, many community members, including their parents have identified more closely with China in a broad sense than before. Children and adolescents themselves also have more feeling of belonging to the Chinese culture and admit their Chineseness rather than narrow themselves with the ethnicity of one specific province or area of China. This is to say that the cultural attachment to region-based identity has been weakened.

Admittedly, when describing where their parents came from, some children provided the answers related to a specific city or province: Beijing, Shanghai, Guangdong Province, Jiangsu Province, for example. However, these names are more like a hometown or the place of birth of their parents, rather than a kind of cultural attachment. When going to China, though, these places are always on the list to go to; many of the children also tend to travel to other cities to know and feel the Chinese cultures, rather than situating themselves only at specific hometown level.

Therefore, in the dimension of self-identification, these children and adolescents regard Chinese language as a means and a switch to attach to Chinese culture. This type of cultural attachment tends to be a belonging to the Chinese culture in a broad sense and the children acknowledge their Chinese ethnicity rather than their self-identification to the specific region, owing to the changing language and cultural environment. Against this backdrop, the children learn and use Mandarin more frequently and in a formal method, in contrast to dialects only acquired and used in casual communication.

### **7.2.2 Chinese language as an indicator in the dimension of observed identity**

According to participant observation and interviews, Chinese as heritage language is also found to work in the dimension of observed identity, which refers to what ethnicity others

believe you to be. Chinese-Australian children and adolescents' observed identity is always assessed silently, in accidental or long-term interactions or observations. These children's identity is detected and examined through observable appearance and characteristics revealed via interactions, which is classified as 'appearance-based observed identity' and 'interaction-based observed identity' (Roth, 2016, p. 1313). Being able to use Chinese language or not acts as an interaction-based indicator for others to examine, whether a child with Chinese appearance has Chinese ethnicity or not.

Since characteristics of observers—such as their relationship with the children—or the ethnicity and experience of observers can also influence how they assess these children's ethnicity, this research draws on three cases that represent three groups of people who have had interactions with these children in Chinese language. They are a Chinese international university student, a Chinese teacher in Chinese community school and a Chinese-Australian child. They represent people who do not have frequent interactions with the children studied, who have frequent interactions with school-aged Chinese Australians, and who belong to the same group of people as the children, respectively.

Interviewee 109 (27; M; 3 March 2018) is a Chinese international student who is currently a teaching assistant in a university in Australia. He has been studying in Australia for three years and has been tutoring for two years. He frequently had conversations with some first-year students in his class and accidentally had some chats with Australian-born students with Chinese ethnicity who had just graduated from high school. When asked 'What do you think about this group of students' ethnicity?', Interviewee 109 said:

I reckon that they behave more like Australians rather than Chinese. Though sometimes they talk with me in fluent Chinese language, their accents, ways of pronunciation and

use of words are different. Also, their behaviours and manners differ from the manners of Chinese students that I know in China. (Interviewee 109, 27; M; 3 March 2018)

Interviewee 109 represents some Chinese people who have opportunities to observe school-aged Chinese Australians for a period of time and assess the adolescents' cultural identity via their own observations and judgements. However, since their interactions are limited, these people do not necessarily have a good understanding of these adolescents. They can only judge their identity through appearance and interactions based on their current level of understanding. In this case, Chinese as a heritage language plays as an indicator for people to assess children and adolescents' ethnicity in the dimension of 'observed identity'.

In contrast with the abovementioned observers, Chinese teachers in community school have many more interactions and conversations with these children and adolescents, which means that they have a better understanding of the children. The Chinese language in which Chinese teachers communicate with the children also instructs teachers to identify what ethnic identity the children and adolescents have. 'Usually, the more the children admit their Chineseness, the more they are interested in learning and using Chinese language, and the more fluently they could use Chinese', Interviewee 111, a Chinese teacher in Year 7, said (42; F; 17 November 2018). Interviewee 111 and Interviewee 110 (35; F; 17 November 2018) both regard these children as Chinese more than Australian, though they acknowledge that some behaviours and manners of these children are different from Chinese students who grow up in China. Interviewee 110 said:

I think these children are more like Chinese children. No, not like, they are Chinese children. They come to Chinese community school to learn Chinese language and most of them choose Chinese subject as one of the VCE subjects in higher grades, which is like most children growing up in China. (Interviewee 110, 35; F; 17 November 2018)

This group of people perceive Chinese-Australian children and adolescents as more like Chinese people, or at least admit their Chineseness to a large extent. This is partly because these teachers have known for a long time how the children's parents treat the children in respect to their study—getting up early to send children to community school during weekends and waiting for them outside the classroom during class time. The supportive attitude of these parents is similar to how parents treat their children in China. This makes this group of observers take the positivity of learning Chinese as an indicator in assessing the children's ethnicity. Another reason is that these teachers tend to have cultural inclination when assessing this problem because of their standpoint. However, a point needed to be made clear is that 'Chinese children' in these teachers' words refers more to *Huaren Ertong*, and 'Chinese adolescents' refers more to *Huaren Qingshaonian*, which means children and adolescents who have Chinese ethnicity rather than *Zhongguo Ertong* and *Zhongguo Qingshaonian*, which means children and adolescents who were born and grew up in China.

To differentiate from a self-identification dimension, this section also analyses cases about how children and adolescents perceive other children and adolescents. According to the data analysis, 23 of 32 regarding their peers as 'Chinese Australian'. This rate is close to the rate of their self-identification with 'Chinese ethnicity'. They learn Chinese language together during weekends and some of them are good friends after class. This leads these children and adolescents to have similar perceptions about their peers as about themselves in regard to issues of ethnicity, despite ethnicity for them being simplified to 'Where do you come from?'. In this process, Chinese language acts as an interaction-based indicator that helps children think about what ethnicity their peers have.

This section provides three types of observers who have interactions with school-aged Chinese Australians to different degrees. They all have communication with the children and

adolescents in Chinese language. Choosing these three types of observers is not to provide answers about how others perceive Chinese-Australian children and adolescents regarding their ethnicity. Rather, this is to indicate that Chinese as a heritage language works in the dimension of 'observed identity' and it is an interaction-based indicator helping others perceive and assess what ethnicity these children and adolescents have. Personal experience, frequency of interaction, context of conversation, and relationship with children and adolescents all contribute to people's various observations and assessment of their ethnic identity.

### **7.2.3 Chinese language as a stress in the perspective of reflected identity**

Based on the analysis of data collected from observations and interviews, this study also discovers that Chinese language plays an important role in the dimension of reflected identity, which refers to the ethnicity that children and adolescents believe others assume them to be. Different from perception by self and by others, reflected identity is a combination of the two. Reflected identity has been explored in some existing literature to discuss questions such as, 'What ethnicity do others think you are?' These studies mostly focused on racial classification by appearance-based factors (Vargas, 2015), which failed to provide an insight into the influence of interaction-based factors, such as language, in the identity construction process. However, data from interviews and observations in this research suggests that language is an important factor for school-aged Chinese Australians in assuming how others think about them regarding their ethnicity, which may also influence how they identify themselves.

Differing from appearance-based indicators, such as facial or other physical features, which are inborn and could not be changed easily, language is an ability that could be nurtured by one's efforts. Chinese-Australian children and adolescents know that others could only

interpret their ethnicity by observing their appearance if they have no communication with them in Chinese. However, when communication is conducted in Chinese language, the ability and fluency of the language is also a factor for others to assess their ethnicity, especially for those who are not familiar with these children and adolescents and have had few interactions before. Being able to speak Chinese language or not, in this case is a kind of pressure for these children and adolescents when they consider the question 'What may others assume me to be?' Therefore, language works as a stress in the dimension of reflected identity for them.

For example, Interviewee 90 (17; F; 5 September 2017) graduated from high school in 2017 and she has been learning Chinese for years. She could speak and understand Chinese language but she had some accent that differentiated her from children born in China. This is common for many Australian-born Chinese adolescents. She never feels anxious in speaking Chinese when she is in Australia, because the Chinese language ability of her peers is similar to hers. However, a trip back to China with her sister made her worried when speaking Chinese language. This is because she came to a new environment where more observers appeared to assess who she was and what ethnicity she had. The assessment by people she happened to meet in China was via a combination of both appearance and language, rather than their experience and understanding of Interviewee 90. This made her feel nervous when she spoke Chinese language because she knew her language skills would influence how others observed and examined her. She said:

When I spoke to people I met in China in Chinese, the expression in their eyes was a little bit wired and I thought they knew my sister and I were not Chinese adolescents or at least we were different with adolescents born and growing up in China. They thought I was a Chinese girl when I did not speak Chinese but when they heard what I spoke in

Chinese they think we were wired and might know that we were not born in China.

(Interviewee 90, 17; F; 5 September 2017)

What children and adolescents believe others assume them to be appears to be different from as in fact others assume them to be. This is not a problem to adults but can be an issue to children and adolescents who are in the process of forming their complex perception of identity in a wider society. We do not know how the people Interviewee 90 met assumed her to be Chinese or half-Chinese, but we know from this case that children and adolescents' assumption of others' perception of themselves exerts some pressure on them to speak Chinese language. Sometimes they feel embarrassed that they cannot speak Chinese as fluently and accurately as Chinese people when they face native Chinese speakers. Therefore, as we saw above, Chinese language ability acts as a kind of stress in the dimension of reflected identity of Chinese-Australian children and adolescents, which may influence their use of Chinese and their self-identification.

### **7.3 Inconsistency and hybridity**

In Section 7.2, this study analysed different roles that language plays in multiple dimensions of ethnic identity of the children and adolescents. The awareness to distinguish ethnic identity from the multidimensional perspective provides the possibility for this research to discuss the inconsistency and fluidity among different dimensions of their identity. In addition, the discussion above mainly focuses on Chinese language's role in their formation and reconfiguration of Chinese ethnic identity in multiple dimensions. Their Australian identity, especially the combination and negotiation of both Chinese and Australian identities, has not been analysed.

Based on the theoretical framework of this research, which is dual-track culturalisation and empirical data, this study first analyses the inconsistency among school-aged Chinese

Australians ethnic and cultural identity in multiple dimensions. It then explores the negotiation among their hybridity, which is also an important characteristic of their identity, examining the role their bilingual skills play in the process of their identity construction. This research addresses the two strands of multiple identities, one being their identity of one ethnicity, namely Chinese, in multidimensional layers, and the other being their multiple identities rooted towards China and Australia.

### **7.3.1 Inconsistency among multiple dimensions of cultural identity**

As discussed above, the role that language plays in multiple dimensions of immigrant children's identity is under-researched. Accordingly, the inconsistencies across dimensions of identity caused by language ability and language use have not been well explored in the existing literature, either. Based on the above discussion, immigrant children and adolescents' Chinese language ability and use influence these children's identity construction in three aspects—self-identification, interaction-based observed identity and reflected identity. Chinese language acts as a switch, an indicator and a stress in multiple dimensions of these children's identity.

Since language plays different kinds of role in multiple dimensions of ethnic and cultural identity, it is common that the identity in each dimension is inconsistent with the identity in the other dimensions. According to the analysis of data, this research found that inconsistencies between cultural identities of different dimensions may cause some negative psychological consequences and negative attitudes in these children and adolescents towards learning and using Chinese language. Some interviewees, for example, said that they felt reluctant to speak Chinese when they were expected to speak it as fluently as other Chinese people, due to their Chinese-like appearance:

I was born in Australia and grew up in Australia. I have learnt Chinese for years so I can speak Chinese well, but I feel more comfortable and relaxed when I speak English. I regard myself as an Australian, but I also acknowledge I am an Australian with Chinese ethnicity. However, when I am expected to speak Chinese as well as others because of my appearance, I feel uncomfortable and do not want to speak Chinese in that context. I know they think I am a Chinese because I have black hair and yellow skin. (Interviewee 118, 14; M; 17 November 2018)

Inconsistency between perceptions by oneself and the others is critical in this example and in the wider experiences of other children and adolescents. Many of them grow up in Australian society and behave in a more local Australian way than Chinese style. They mostly think that they are Australians, which is not only embodied in closed-end self-checking in citizenship status as Australian citizens, but also in open-end self-identifying themselves as Australian people, though most of them understand and admit that their parents are from China and they have Chinese ethnicity and background. However, their Chinese appearance makes people who do not know them well think that they are Chinese people and expect that they can speak Chinese fluently. This inconsistency between self-identification and reflected identity is highly likely to exert pressure on the children who are still in the stage of developing their Chinese language skills, and thus discourage them from learning and using Chinese language.

Many ethnic studies consider how one aspect of identity influences another. For example, a study on racial identification analyses how individuals' phenotype influences their observed identity (Feliciano, 2016). The inequalities of genetic ancestry, self-identification, phenotype, observed identity and reflected identity have also been explored in the health fields (Bratter & Gorman, 2011), criminal studies (Penner & Saperstein, 2015), and social stratification (Telles & Paschel, 2014). When zooming to language and dimensions of ethnic and cultural identity,

some dimensions of identity could not be included in this discussion. As discussed above, language has influences mostly in the processes of self-identification, observed identity and reflected identity. Therefore, the inconsistency among dimensions of cultural identity is also discussed within this scope.

The abovementioned example of Interviewee 118's negative attitude to using language represents a common phenomenon among the children and adolescents studied. A point that needs to be clarified here is that observed identity and reflected identity should be well distinguished. On many occasions, reflected identity is not inconsistent with observed identity. Children who believe that others assume them to be Chinese become reluctant to speak Chinese language. However, sometimes it is because they are sensitive to this issue and overemphasise their differences from Chinese native speakers. In fact, it is common that others could easily identify that they are different from Chinese native speakers via their Western-style manner and thus may not have a high expectation of their Chinese language skills. Their stress about speaking Chinese, which is led by the inconsistency between self-identification and others' perception, is partly caused by the children and adolescents themselves.

### **7.3.2 Negotiating hybridity among Chinese-Australian children and adolescents**

Following the discussion on the inconsistency among cultural identities in different dimensions, this section extends the discussion to these children and adolescents' negotiation between their dual identities. The identity orientation of immigrants has been classified by many studies to various types, including conflicted, monocultural, complementary, and hybrid ethnic identity (Comănaru, Noels, & Dewaele, 2018; Ward, Stuart, & Kus, 2011). According to data obtained from participant observations and interviews, this research suggests that those children and adolescents who were born in Australia or migrated to

Australia at an early age and who have cultural and emotional connections to China, Chinese culture and Chineseness, have dual living experiences. This is generally described as 'hybridity' in ethnic studies.

Hybridity is an emic description that captures the dual living realities, including two cultures, languages, and identities of migrant children and youths (Wang & Collins, 2016b). This study applies hybridity to analyse their cultural context and in this dual-cultural context how they develop their bilingual skills and how their bilingual skills help them negotiate between their dual identities. Based on the theoretical framework of this thesis—dual-track culturalisation framework—this study addresses their identity in the Chinese track of the dual-track culturalisation from a multidimensional perspective in the above section, and it explores their identity issues from the dual-track perspective in this section.

According to data analysis, this research identifies that these children and adolescents form their dual identities through their use of dual languages; and language acts as a switch, helping them transfer easily from one cultural context to another. However, the non-fluency and accent of Chinese-language speaking makes them sometimes feel 'in-betweenness', which was captured by some scholars discussing migrants' ethnic identity (Ang, 2001). The use of language can either lead the children to have dual cultural identification, or to have feelings of in-betweenness that obstructs them from being totally accepted by either culture.

When asked 'Where are you from?', 30 of 32 school-aged Chinese Australians identified themselves as Chinese Australians, providing answers such as 'Australians with Chinese background', 'Australians but parents are from China', and 'both Australian and Chinese'. Many younger children could not give explicit answers about ethnicity-related questions. However, through talking with them, this study obtained some key words including both 'Chinese' and 'Australians', which indicates that they know that though they grew up in

Australia, they and their family still have connections with China, no matter whether it is physical, emotional or cultural. For example, Interviewee 20 (8; M; 6 May 2017) said, 'I think I am an Australian, but I also think I am part of Chinese people because my parents and my grandparents are all Chinese'.

In contrast, adolescents in more senior classes were aware of ethnicity and could express their feeling of belonging explicitly. Most of them identified themselves as Chinese-Australian adolescents or Australians with Chinese ethnicity. They usually used the place of birth, year of migration to Australia, place where they grew up and family's ethnic history as variables in assessing their ethnicity. They knew they grew up in Australia and are immersed in Australia culturally and socially; meanwhile, they and their family members are connected with China and Chinese culture and are culturally permeated by Chineseness. They described this kind of life as 'living in-betweenness' (Interviewee 67, 13; F; 12 August 2017).

In existing studies, the feeling of in-betweenness was always explained as the pervasive sense of ambivalence (Ang, 2001), sense of struggle (Min & Kim, 2000), and dual-track demarginalisation process (Gao, 2006). These explanations exercised the flexibility in analysing in certain contexts and provided insight in understanding 1.5 generation migrants' hybridising identities. However, these analyses, to some extent, were relatively negative in describing their psychological status in their everyday life and their cultural belonging. Data of this research indicates that their cultural identity is performable. The performability is possible through their use and switch of dual languages. According to many interviewees, language is a switch that they use to help them transfer seamlessly from one living status to another, connecting them to dual-track cultures and societies. Interviewee 77 provided an example:

When I attend school in daytime, I speak English. This makes me know that I am an Australian. Though my unchangeable appearance shows that I have Chinese or Asian ethnicity, my feeling of being an Australian is strengthened when I am immersed in the Australian society and speak English. Meanwhile, when I finish class back home, I switch my language use mode to Chinese or part of Chinese. This reminds me that I am in a Chinese community and Chinese-style manners work better than western-style. I always behave more like a Chinese and speak Chinese when I talked with people in Chinese community (Interviewee 77, 15; M; 26 August 2017).

Interviewee 77's accounting for her performable hybridity points to one key issue. The ethnicity I as a researcher observed can only partly explain these children's cultural identity, since there is the possibility that they perform their ethnicities partly through their language switch. This research finding is consistent with research outcomes revealed in Chapter 5, which suggest that these children and adolescents are self-control mechanism in switching and using Chinese and English to cope with situational changes.

When their situationally alternating language use and corresponding ethnic and cultural identity are mentioned, another characteristic of their identity should be pointed out. That is, their self-identification is dynamic situationally and longitudinally. The dynamic is reflected in interviews with their parents, who have had chances to observe them for years and whose words are plausible. A Chinese parent, Interviewee 103 described:

Though my child was born in Australia, his manners are more like a Chinese child during his early childhood. I think this is because he was raised in Chinese community and spent much of his childhood with his grandparents and his Chinese peers. However, now he is in Year 9 and behaves in much more western-style and he takes Australian as his first nationality and Chinese as second nationality. This could be told by that his

support firstly goes to Australia and second goes to China during Olympics in last summer. I asked her why, and she said because her friend all support Australia and her family support China (Interviewee 103, 40; F; 25 September 2017).

In sum, this study emphasises the hybridity of these children and adolescents who have been observed in this study. On most occasions, many of those who live in a dual-track cultural environment and are culturally permeated by two influential cultures, acknowledge their hybridity and identify themselves as Australians with Chinese blood, Australian with Chinese ethnicity or Chinese Australians. When they encounter different cultural situations, no matter whether in a Chinese-speaking environment or an English-speaking environment, they use and switch languages to negotiate between dual identities. Their cultural identity may change over time and situations.

#### **7.4 Diversifying the factors shaping ethnic and cultural identity**

Based on the above discussion, it has become clear that language plays different roles in multiple dimensions of the children and adolescents' ethnic and cultural identity. In other words, language influences understanding of one's ethnicity from different perspectives. This also indicates that language's impact is influential rather than determinative. Some other factors co-work with language in the process of these children and adolescents' formation of ethnic and cultural identity, jointly contributing to the formation of their ethnic identity by self and by others. According to evidence collected from the fieldwork, this research suggests that place of origin, family's ethnic background, and family's socio-economic status have most significant influence on these their identity. This section examines how these factors influence Chinese-Australian children's ethnic identity.

#### 7.4.1 Place of origin

Through many interviews with children and their parents, this study found that immigrants' place of origin significantly influences how they perceive themselves. When the relation between place of origin and identity is mentioned, many may think that people tend to have cultural attachment to their place of origin, such as place of birth and their parents' hometown. However, this study takes features of immigrant children's place of origin into consideration, examining how this influences their self-perception. In this section, place of origin is more than the name of a place; rather, it involves cultural and social indications for these Chinese children and adolescents to think about who they are.

For many of these children and adolescents, where they or their parents come from partly decides whether and to what extent they would like to acknowledge their cultural attachment to China and Chinese culture. They tend to admit and admire their heritage culture more if they or their parents come from perceptually privileged regions than those from less privileged regions. For example, Interviewee 10 (38; F; 18 March 2017), who is a parent from Beijing, compared her son Michael with her friend's son James regarding these two children's self-perceptions. Michael was six years old and learned Chinese in a Year 1 class. He migrated to Australia with his parents when he was four years old. James migrated to Australia at five years old with his parents from City J, a third-tier city in north China whose GDP ranked 80th to 100th according to the National Bureau of Statistics of China. They both lived in Australia for about two years and were in the stage of changing language preference after one to two years immersion in an English-speaking environment. This has been discussed in Chapter 4, in which this research illuminates that Chinese-Australian children tend to alter their preferred language from Chinese to English no matter whether they were born in Australia or migrated at an early age. However, Michael and James have different

self-perceptions about who they are, due to their different places of origin. Interviewee 10 explained:

I think my son now acknowledges both his Chineseness and Australianness even though most of his friends now are Australian children. This is because once I heard him tell his friend that he came from Beijing. I think China and Australia are both his hometowns, at least in the current stage. However, James was totally different. He told his mom that he was Aussie and did not want to go back to City J because he thought City J was dirty and nasty (Interviewee 10, 38; F; 18 March 2017).

As the national capital city of China, Beijing is one of the cities with high-quality education, medical care and infrastructure. Even children who are not cognitively mature could easily feel the cleanness and order of a relatively developed city. A good city in children's eyes means a place with delicious foods, beautiful gardens to play in and more recreational facilities, which could be found more easily in Beijing than in under-developed cities. Children who migrated to Melbourne from a city that is less developed than Melbourne in many aspects, at least in the children's view, may not want to go back to their place of origin and may feel less identification with Chinese culture. Since first and second tier cities in China and in Australia have their own characteristics respectively, for children who migrated from first and second tier cities in China it is hard to decide which one is better. Therefore, they tend to acknowledge their belonging to China and Chinese culture and tend to have dual identities in their self-identification process.

This also happens in Chinese-Australian children from Southeast Asian countries.

Interviewee 50 (6; M; 16 June 2017) is a Chinese-Malaysian boy who was born in Australia. He travelled to Malaysia twice with his parents. However, his impression of Malaysia was not good and this also influenced his enthusiasm for learning Chinese and acknowledging his

Asian ethnicities. When asked 'What do you think about Malaysia?', Interviewee 50 said: 'Not good. They don't listen to the law. I don't know why. People there just drive wherever they want and don't follow the traffic law. The environment is also better in Australia' (Interviewee 50, 6; M; 16 June 2017). He learned Chinese in a Year 2 class and was not interested in learning it. He said, 'My mom sends me here and I don't know why they sent me here'. He only acknowledged he was an Australian when talking about where he was from.

#### **7.4.2 Family's ethnic background and personal experience**

Apart from the specific place of origin, family's ethnic background also influences children's ethnic identity, on both dimensions of self-identification and observed identity. The observed identity is especially apparent among immigrant children whose family's ethnicity is different from that of people in their immigrant country. For example, non-Chinese children whose family migrated from Britain to Australia are observed as Australian children and few may question where they are from, only according to their appearance. As the 2016 Australian Census indicates, immigrants from Britain indeed compose a significant part of the Australian population, with 33.6% of Australians having English ethnicity and 8.6% having Scottish ethnicity. In contrast, children whose family came from Asian countries, where people there have a relatively different ethnicity, are easily observed as having some Asian ethnicities. Family's ethnic background influences immigrant children's observed identity from many aspects, and the appearance-based observation is the most straightforward and apparent.

In the process of self-identification, what ethnicity a family has could be simplified to where your parents and grandparents come from in a child's eyes. Children are not mature enough to form a complete and explicit perception about their ethnicity. Their family history and ancestry, however, have a silent influence on how these children perceive themselves. This

may be made clear by providing comparative cases of children who were born in an interracial-marriage family, the number of which has been growing in Australia, and in a Chinese family.

Interviewee 96 has a daughter aged ten who learned Chinese in a Year 4 class. Interviewee 96 observed that all characters in her daughter's drawings about family were people with black hair and yellow skin, but drawings about peers showed them with yellow hair and white skin. However, in her description, her daughter's best friend Rebecca, whose father is an Australian and whose mother is a Chinese-Singaporean, drew herself as a girl with half her face with yellow skin and black hair, with the other half of her face with white skin and yellow hair. She added:

Though it is difficult for children in this stage to express explicitly what their ethnic identity is, they have implicit thoughts about this question via their daily observations. The appearance and behaviour manners of a family influence how they perceive themselves. This is nature. (Interviewee 96, 35; F; 9 September 2017)

As discussed in Section 7.3.2, these children mostly have hybridity, acknowledging both their Chineseness and Australianness. Family history and ethnicity are what children are born with, and help form and strengthen their Chineseness in their Chinese track of the dual-track culturalisation. Children's personal experience, however, works in both tracks of their dual-track lives, helping them construct both their Chineseness and Australianness. In the Chinese track, Chinese cultural consumption in the Chinese track was explored in Chapter 5. In the Australian track, cultural experience—such as taking a break during Australian national holidays, and learning Australian national songs with friends—reminds these children that they are living in Australia and they are Australians.

### 7.4.3 Family's socio-economic status

Evidence obtained from the participant observations and interviews also indicates that family's socio-economic status influences children and adolescents' Chinese language use and thus has an impact on their self-identification. This impact has been analysed from a mediating perspective, with some research examining in which way the socio-economic conditions of a family influences children's cognitive development (Guo & Harris, 2000). This study indicates that a Chinese immigrant family's social status involves a series of key factors that affect children's language learning and ethnic and cultural identity. It acts as a mediation, setting the background to influence children subtly, rather than influencing children in a straightforward way.

The most important factor that is associated with a family's socio-economic status is the volume of resources accessible to children and the way in which these children acquire the resources. A family with middle or upper-middle socio-economic status always tends to have the ability to provide children with higher-quality educational resources. Chinese parents in this kind of family have a high likelihood to be well educated and better skilled. They usually not only value their children's education in day school, but also value their Chinese language development in community school. They usually hope their children can learn Chinese language well and become bilingual. Children growing up in this kind of family are influenced by their parents subconsciously. They could feel their parents' effort and the importance of being able to speak Chinese. Therefore, they tend to have a closer cultural attachment to Chinese culture and Chineseness. As a Chinese teacher in Year 9 explained:

If parents are well educated and are successful in their work, their children tend to have a good performance in Chinese language learning. These children also tend to acknowledge their Chineseness and behave in a more Chinese style than the others.

This is because this kind of family always values education and the family environment is supportive for these children to learn Chinese and also to self-identify that they have Chinese ethnicity. (Interviewee 56, 40; F; 5 August 2017)

In contrast, some Chinese parents who do not have a full-time job, and run some small business to earn a living, usually have less time and pay less attention to their children's Chinese language development. Chinese language is learnt mainly during weekends, and not being able to speak Chinese has little influence on the children's academic performance in day school. In this case, if parents do not value Chinese language education and do not encourage their children to learn Chinese language, children may have no awareness of the value of being able to speak Chinese language.

Children in this type of family have less exposure to Chinese cultural environment and tend to feel less that they belong to China and Chinese culture. Interviewee 92 said:

One of my friends only sent her children to learn the Chinese language for several months and then gave it up because she had to run her retail shop during weekends. If parents do not insist in helping children learn Chinese, children have a higher possibility to give up learning it. (Interviewee 92, 42; F; 9 September 2017)

Therefore, it is usually the case, according to this study, that the upper socio-economic status a family is in, the more resources they provide to children, the more the family value the Chinese language education and children's belonging to Chinese culture, and the better Chinese skills that children in this family tend to have. This also influences how children self-identify themselves.

## 7.5 Summary

The present chapter examines school-aged Chinese Australians' language-identity relations. Their ethnic and cultural identity is formed in a dual-track complicated language and cultural environment, which has been explored in the previous chapters. The key argument of this chapter is that Chinese language as a heritage language has different roles in multiple dimensions and this multidimensionality has been ignored in the existing literature.

Specifically, this chapter begins with an introduction to the existence of multiple dimensions of identity, and the possible fluidity of dimensions of ethnic identity. Based on the rich data obtained from interviews and observations, this chapter contextualises this issue in the Chinese community in Australia and examines what influence learning and using Chinese language has on the multiple dimensions of Chinese-Australian children's cultural identity. This research suggests that Chinese language acts as a switch, an indicator and a stress in the construction of their identity in dimensions of self-identification, observed identity and reflected identity. These three dimensions of identity were chosen because, according to empirical data, language has a most significant influence on these aspects of their identity formation. This does not mean that language has no impact on the other dimensions of identity.

The chapter then highlights two characteristics of these children's ethnic identity, which are the possible inconsistency among dimensions of identity, and their hybridity. In this section, this research examines what influence language has in these children's negotiation process. Two strands of multiple identities are addressed, one being these children's identity in multidimensional layers in the Chinese track of their dual-track culturalisation, and the other being immigrant children's multiple identities rooted in China and Australia.

To provide a fuller picture of the relationship between language and ethnic identity, the last section explicates that language could not decide immigrant children's identity and there are some other factors co-working in their identity-construction process. Based on the analysis of empirical evidence, this research identifies three factors that have significant influence on these children and adolescents' identity: place of origin, family ethnicity and personal experience, and the socio-economic status of family.

Instead of reaching a conclusion regarding the outcome of the children and adolescents' ethnic identity, this chapter aims to add fluidity in identity and the possible inconsistency among different dimensions under the influence of Chinese heritage language use. In addition, this chapter also considers the influences of factors other than language. It makes a contribution to understanding the role that Chinese heritage language plays in ethnic identity of in-between subjects, who are immigrant children and adolescents in this research.

## **Chapter 8 Conclusion: Experiencing Dual-track Culturalisation via Language Use**

The 21st century has been witnessing the ever-fast and ever-frequent mobility of population. With demographic changes, including cross-border migration, more and more people in immigrant countries experience socio-cultural tensions and negotiations among more than one culture and ethnicity. Against this backdrop, the overarching question that this research has sought to examine concerns a vitally important but under-researched topic—school-aged immigrants’ language use and their culturalisation process. Contextualising in the Chinese community in Australia, this research aims to address why and how school-aged Chinese Australians learn and use Chinese language in multiple social settings, and what influence Chinese language use has on these immigrant children and adolescents’ perceptions of bilingualism and cultural identity.

The final chapter of this thesis has four key tasks to complete. First, it begins with a summary of the research findings, followed by discussion of how these findings connect with and contribute to existing scholarship in this area. This summary looks at the existing research gaps in terms of immigrant children and adolescents’ language use and culturalisation process and synthesises the findings from the preceding five empirical chapters, in direct response to the research questions reviewed in the introductory chapter. Second, this chapter highlights the theoretical and practical significance of this research from three perspectives, namely concept, structure and function. To theorise the language use of these children, the study puts forwards a ‘dual-track culturalisation’ theoretical framework to structuralise the children’s behaviour and psychological status of their language use. This section also states how this study contributes to studies in the field. Third, as an interdisciplinary study, this research

devotes itself to discussions of the topic from a new perspective combining of sociology of immigration, ethnic studies, language and communication, and education. Chinese-Australian children and adolescents are an important but under-researched group. Taking them as a case study, this research provides implications in the abovementioned fields. Finally, drawing on these analyses and discussions, the chapter then outlines limitations and future study directions of the current research.

## **8.1 Summary of research findings**

The main questions raised by this thesis are why and how school-aged Chinese Australians learn and use Chinese language and how Chinese language use influences the construction and reconfiguration of their ethnic and cultural identity. To answer these questions the thesis, on the one hand, reviews the existing literature in the field, which helps identify the gaps in the current scholarship and outdated analysis inconsistent with the fast-changing condition in the immigrant society; on the other hand, this research has obtained a great amount of first-hand data from the fieldwork conducted in several schools and the Chinese community in Australia. This section firstly summarises the existing research gaps from a theoretical perspective, then follows a thematic re-examination and summary of the research findings based on this research project.

### **8.1.1 Overcoming mainstream-centric, homogeneous and dated viewpoints**

This section briefly re-examines the existing views in the studies on Chinese immigrant children and adolescents' language use and bilingualism in the Chinese community in Australia. Based on the analyses in the above chapters, this study found the existing scholarship is dated, homogeneous and mainstream-centric, which is not suitable to probe school-aged Chinese Australians' Chinese language use.

The current literature on the issues of language use of 1.75-generation and second-generation Chinese immigrant children is dated, as embodied in three aspects. First, literature on school-aged Chinese immigrants' language use is mostly based on small-scale and short-term fieldwork, focusing on one family or a small number of Chinese children. For example, one study is found to be based as few as three Chinese-Canadian children and their families as cases, examining their language practices in the home setting (Li, 2006). Studies like this could not represent the majority of Chinese immigrant children well. This is especially true in the Chinese community in Australia, where population composition has changed significantly since the large-scale Chinese mobility of the late 1980s. A study based on the long-term, large-scale observations and investigations of these children and adolescents' language use is urgent and necessary.

Second, the existing scholarship mostly probed the questions associated with Chinese immigrant children's language use from a single perspective, which is hardly able to be taken as systematic and comprehensive. For example, there are studies focusing on the capitals obtained in the children's learning and using process, the Chinese heritage language education in Australia and the role of families (Mu, 2014; Orton, 2010; Pauwel, 2005). This thesis devotes itself to a systematic and comprehensive study examining the Chinese language use by school-aged Chinese immigrants in Australia. It is logically organised, with the discussion of motives behind their language learning and using behaviours, the process of their learning and using, their perceptions of Chinese language and multilingualism, and issues of their cultural identity.

Third, the outdatedness of the current studies is also embodied in ignoring the changing attractiveness of socio-economic conditions of the homeland of Chinese migrants. Compared with decades ago, when China had less influence in the world and its economy grew slowly,

the recent decades have witnessed China's economy growing rapidly, which directly indicates the country's development in many aspects. This is even more significant in the Chinese community in Australia, due to the Australia's declining manufacturing sector and diminishing employment opportunities. However, this change has not been reflected well in the existing studies. Without consideration of China's active economy and Australia's historic shift toward Asia, which was initiated in the 1970s and early 1980s, we could not capture the entire picture of Chinese immigrants in Australia.

The problem mentioned above directly leads to the mainstream-centric viewpoints in the existing literature associated with Chinese immigrants, including in the studies regarding immigrant children with Chinese background. Many studies indicated that Western countries involved Chinese as a second language in their educational system, creating and maintaining the environment for Chinese offspring to develop their Chinese skills. However, many of these studies did not consider the two sets of cultural and language environment of these children. This kind of dual-track influences are even significant in the Chinese community in Australia, due to the demographic increase in people speaking Mandarin and the consequently supportive language and cultural environment in the Chinese community in Australia. More importantly, the economic gravity from China has become greater than that from Australia. However, few studies considered these environmental changes and the dual-track influences on these children and adolescents, who are in the important stage for their cognitive development, which is mainstream-centric.

In addition to the outdatedness and mainstream-centric perspective, this thesis found that the existing knowledge on the topic of Chinese heritage language by school-aged Chinese immigrants is homogeneous. This type of homogeneity exists in many strands of studies, as has been discussed in the above chapters. For example, when the discussion is related to

immigrant children, many previous studies conducted their analyses within the scope of education, examining the issues from an educational perspective, such as how these children learn the language and how to create a better language environment. However, attention should also be given to some other important aspects, such as their agency in using this language and the role of Chinese as a heritage language in the process of their culturalisation. Homogeneous discussions within a single field led the previous studies' failure to break the stereotype and put forward innovative ideas.

Such homogeneity is also embodied in research revolving around motivational factors and identity issues of these children. Some studies applied Bourdieu's 'capital' theory to analyse heritage language learning by immigrant children, examining whether being able to speak heritage language could bring immigrant children cultural, social or emotional capitals (Mu, 2015a). These studies over-emphasised the utilitarian significance of language capacity, which is important, but they failed to consider these immigrant children's and their family's psychological status and to analyse this issue in the broad environment. According to data obtained from this fieldwork, many Chinese immigrant families make this decision to send children to learn the Chinese language to avoid future risk and uncertainty. The analysis regarding the motives of their behaviours from social-psychological and behavioural perspectives is also not broad and deep enough in the literature. In addition, studies regarding immigrant children and adolescents' ethnic and cultural identity were also homogeneous. Most of them discussed their hybridity and how they negotiate among more than one ethnic and cultural identity. The discussion from this perspective is prevalent and interesting indeed, because people tend to pay more attention to topics like cultural conflicts. However, many of the studies did not step out of their comfort zone, to think about the existence of multiple dimensions of identity as well as the complexity of cultural identity and to consider which dimension they focused on.

In sum, the existing studies regarding this topic are found to somehow be dated, mainstream-centric and homogeneous. This makes systematic research on school-aged Chinese Australians' language use and their culturalisation process urgent and important.

### **8.1.2 Thematic summaries of empirical findings**

Following the general review of the studies in the field, this section summarises the main research findings from five thematic topics that form a logical succession, namely motivation, learning process, cultural use, language ideologies, and cultural identity. This tries to sort the central research questions put forward in the first chapter out in a more abstract way and represent the empirical contributions. Theoretical contributions of this thesis are summarised and examined in Section 8.2.

#### **8.1.2.1 Motivations behind learning and use of Chinese language**

The current academic work on language learning and use treats motivation as one of the key factors influencing language learners' and users' determination to develop language skills (Murray, 2011). For school-aged Chinese Australians and their families who experience what this study has defined as dual-track culturalisation, their motivation to maintain a language which is seemingly used less frequently is worth exploration. Under the theoretical framework 'dual-track culturalisation', Chapter 3 analyses this issue systematically and dynamically, with special consideration given to the complicated Sino-Australian cultural environment that the children and adolescents are immersed into.

It is because of the dual-track cultural and language environment that the decision-making process of learning the Chinese language is made jointly by children and their families rather than children themselves. In many cases, the decision is largely made by parents, a high proportion of whom are better-trained than previous generations. To respond to the rapidly changing environment, well-educated Chinese parents who are concerned with their

children's future are sensitive in helping the children develop their bilingual skills. In the data analysis, this research identified four roles that parents play in children's Chinese language learning and using behaviours: actual decision-makers, encouragers, tutors, and creators of the Chinese language environment. In this process, Chinese parents are not only involved in children's language learning activities, but also act as tutors and language environment creators, which are different from parents in families that are in mono cultural and language environments.

This research also examined the influence of peers in the children and adolescents' language learning process and suggested that peer influence affects their language learning in the following ways: companionship, modelling, exerting pressure, and inducing conformity. It is also due to the dual-track cultural environment that they are influenced by their peers more significantly than those in a single language environment.

Parents' diverse roles and peers' multiple influences jointly lead to the increase of children's self-consciousness and the polarisation of their learning behaviours. On one side of this polarisation are the children who learn and use Chinese spontaneously, with high enthusiasm; on the other side is a minority group of children who are reluctant to maintain their language skills. Their perceptions about Chinese-English bi-literacy and about themselves through language use will be summarised in the following section.

The decision-making process regarding their language learning and using is complicated, which is jointly contributed by children, parents and peers. Following the discussion of the decision-making, the current study examined the hierarchical structure of the motives behind the language learning and using behaviours of these children. From the instrumental perspective, the children learn Chinese language due to interest, development of communicative skills, and increase in competitive capacity. In the cultural aspect, the

children are influenced to become gradually aware of the conformity of appearance and cultural identity and maintain cultural attachment to Chinese culture. In addition, collectivism that was applied to analyse immigrants' behaviours was examined in this research, which is one of the innovative contributions. Chinese new immigrant families have partially been disconnected from their mother culture by the sudden departure. To avoid uncertainty and obtain the feeling of safety, the Chinese parents – who imitate other parents in the community – decide to send their children to learn the Chinese language. Collectivism, instrumental motivations and culture-oriented motivations jointly form the hierarchical structure of the motivational factors of children's language learning behaviours.

### **8.1.2.2 Language learning process**

Though children and adolescents learn and use the Chinese language with different motives, a great number of children and adolescents of Chinese background in Australia currently sit in the Chinese language classroom to learn and use the language. Following the analysis of motivation, this research, delving into the language practices among the children and adolescents, examined how they learn Chinese language within the scope of school and the mechanisms of language use outside the classroom.

In the aspect of language learning, research findings of this study highlighted the 'in-betweenness' among the children. Different from children who grow up in a mono-language and mono-cultural environment, the children in this thesis are immersed in a multicultural environment and experience multilingual learning. According to the analysis of data, though the development of skills in Chinese starts earlier than that of skills in English because of family reason, the development of English is much faster once children start school than that of Chinese language. This leads to an interesting but unique phenomenon that only happens in immigrant children whose heritage language and mainstream language in the host country

are different. They always experience the change of language preference from heritage language to the mainstream language, and in this case the change happened from Chinese to English. This usually happened half to one year after the children began in a local primary school. After the change, English serves as the first language for most of these children, but this does not necessarily lead to Chinese language attrition in many cases. Afterward, the children continue their dual-track learning and acquisition of both the languages.

Two characteristics of their learning process were examined in this thesis: continuity and non-continuity. Due to the special language environment and the educational polity in Australia, the Chinese language learning process might be interrupted by the high pressure from VCE and the urgent need to make a choice among several subjects. Some adolescents were stimulated by the benefits of possible high marks in the examination and their language skills were boosted in this process. However, some give it up, even if they still have an interest in learning Chinese, because they could not get a high score in the examination. Though the non-continuity of Chinese language learning may happen, the continuity of the learning process was also prominent, both for the persistent Chinese learners and for the group of adolescents who pick up and re-learn the Chinese language in university.

This thesis also provided an analysis of the children's Chinese language learning from linguistic and pedagogical perspectives, in order to provide some suggestions to enhance their Chinese language skills. This research found that the children had unbalanced skill in multiple aspects of language abilities, including speaking, listening, writing and reading. Taking this into consideration, this thesis employed the concepts of language transfer, language distance, and cultural immersion, which hopefully have some implications for educators and policymakers.

### **8.1.2.3 Language practices outside the classroom**

Following the Chinese language learning and acquisition, this research also probe the children's language practices outside the scope of school. Formal learning and cultural practices of languages are two important methods through which the children and adolescents complete the dual-track culturalisation process. Through using Chinese language, they are partly exposed to Chinese culture, which is delivered and embodied in multiple forms. The results of the analysis suggest that they were active agents in determining their intermingling language use. This agency is facilitated through communication, consumption of Chinese cultural products, and by cultural use of Chinese language in wider social settings, rather than through learning within the classroom alone.

Delving into the cultural use of language in the process of culturalisation, the empirical findings of this study suggest the children themselves are control mechanisms in switching between languages. Before schooling, many of them are almost monolingual, and Chinese is the main language that they use to communicate at home. In contrast, the situation changes significantly when they attend primary school. Children switch to the bilingual mode rapidly and the language they consciously choose to use is determined by the English ability of their interlocutors. This not only guarantees the effectiveness of their communication, but also makes these children feel comfortable in communicating.

Apart from communicative language use, consumption of Chinese cultural products is another important aspect when they use Chinese outside the classroom. With technological advancements, the changing composition of Chinese population in Australia, as well as the transformation of Chinese Australians' economic activities related to the creation of cultural products, access to Chinese cultural products in Australia has increased in volume and developed in many more forms. This provides the children and adolescents with more access

to Chinese cultural products and affects their bilingual literacy. Research findings of this study suggest that there are two features in their Chinese cultural consumption process. First, the activities of Chinese language use in consuming different types of Chinese cultural products influence the frequency of their consumption of these products. Nowadays, they usually consume visual cultural products much more frequently than print cultural products. This is mainly caused by the different levels of effort required to engage in different types of cultural consumption. Second, they use intermingling language during this process. This specifically refers to the language they use to decode information in the process of their cultural consumption, which differs from the language they use to encode information. They can understand Chinese information easily, which means that they are able to decode it, while they prefer to interpret information and exchange ideas with their peers in English, which refers to the coding process.

Apart from in the abovementioned settings of language use, these children and adolescents also use Chinese in some other cultural activities in wider social settings, such as travel back to China or at some school-organised camp activities. Chinese-Australian children and adolescents' Chinese language practices outside the classroom promote their culturalisation in the Chinese track of the dual-track culturalisation.

#### **8.1.2.4 Reflexive language ideologies**

Following the analysis of language learning and use in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, Chapter 6 examined how children form their perception of Chinese language through their language practices. Under the influences of conflicting and dual-track cultural environment, conflicting language ideologies among family members and the contradictions of children themselves, the children also form their self-examining and re-examining awareness and thoughts

regarding Chinese language in order to respond to the dynamic cultural and social environment.

The results of the data analysis demonstrate that due to the dual-track cultural environment they are living in, and their individual negotiation between language imagination and realities, the children tend to have language ideologies with a high level of reflexivity. They form their own perceptions of the essence and usefulness of the Chinese language in the longitudinally dynamic and transversely dual-track cultural environment from the macro perspective, in the conflicting language ideologies within the family on the micro level, and through their self-examining and re-examining. On the macro level, opportunities provided by China's rapid economic expansion and Australia's dependence on China's economy influence the public's perception of Chinese people and Chinese language. On the micro level, though family environment is supportive in general, family members tend to be stuck in a dilemma of their children's literacy. They are not only worried about attrition of their children's Chinese language, but also concerned about the competitiveness of their English language skills, especially in the stage before children complete the change of language preference.

By receiving information from the macro-and-micro environments analysed above, the children verify their inherent imagination of the Chinese language with the reality of language use and adjust their perception of Chinese language. Before and after receiving schooling, they receive information from different sources, namely parents, peers as well as wider communities through their extracurricular activities. In this process, the conflicts between language imagination and reality may emerge and children's reflexivity regarding Chinese language and their bi-literacy is embodied dominantly in how they handle these conflicts.

According to their various language ideologies and language-use behaviours guided by language ideologies, this research classified school-aged Chinese Australians into four groups: positive users, blind followers, negative maintainers, and stiff resisters as well as several types of inbetweeners. A self-classification approach was applied, and this typology is mostly based on the children and adolescents' opinions and behaviours about Chinese language use. This typology was put forward, not to differentiate them but to help us understand that they have different and reflexive language perceptions, and the methods they use to handle the conflicts between language imagination and reality are different. In addition, their language ideologies keep being reconstructed, which should be understood from a dynamic perspective.

#### **8.1.2.5 Language and multidimensionality of ethnic and cultural identity**

After the analysis of children and adolescents' perceptions of Chinese language and their bilingual skills, this thesis further examined their perceptions of themselves and the role that language plays in the self-examining process. Due to a lack of awareness of multiple dimensions of identity, and distinguishing them, previous studies failed to identify which dimension of ethnic and cultural identity they focused on and ignored the possible existence of inconsistency among multiple dimensions of identity. This study applies the multidimensional perspective to discuss the language-identity relations, with the purpose of providing more updated and systematic explanations for the issues of immigrant children and adolescents' ethnic and cultural identity.

Instead of reaching a conclusion regarding the outcome of school-aged Chinese Australians' ethnic and cultural identity, this research explains the diverse existences of identity and the inconsistency among different dimensions under the influence of Chinese heritage language use. Data analysis demonstrate that roles of Chinese language in multiple dimensions of

identity vary, namely a switch in the dimension of self-identification, an indicator in the dimension of observed identity, and a stress in the dimension of reflected identity.

With the awareness of considering the identity from a multidimensional perspective, this research's findings also show the inconsistency across identity in different dimensions. This inconsistency between self-identification and reflected identity is the most prominent and is highly likely to exert pressure on some children, which might discourage them from learning and using Chinese language. Following the discussion on the inconsistency among identities in different dimensions, this research also extends the discussion to the children's negotiation among their dual cultural identities, which empirically confirms that immigrant children's 'in-betweenness' also happens in Chinese-Australian children. According to research findings of this study, on most occasions many of these children live in a dual-track cultural environment, being permeated by two cultures. They then identify themselves as Australians with Chinese background, which means that they acknowledge their hybridity and dual cultural properties. The research findings of this study contribute to our understanding of these children's cultural identity in the Chinese track of the dual-track culturalisation from a multidimensional perspective, and our understanding of their identity rooted in both China and Australia.

This study also diversifies the factors that shape the children's cultural identity. Language influences an individual's ethnic identity from different dimensions and different perspectives, which also indicates that language is influential rather than determinative. Based on data analysis, this study probes three most influential factors other than language, which are place of origin, family's ethnic background and personal experience, as well as family's socio-economic status. These factors co-work with Chinese heritage language,

influencing how children and adolescents reflect on themselves, and how they are perceived by the others in their dual-track culturalisation process.

## **8.2 Theoretical significance**

In addition to the research findings drawn from the analysis of empirical data, this study examined the culturalisation process of these children and adolescents via their language use and put forward a new theoretical framework to guide and support the arguments, which is the dual-track culturalisation framework. This framework illustrates the theoretical contribution of this thesis from conceptual, structural and functional aspects.

### **8.2.1 Conceptual innovation**

The current knowledge of immigrant children's culturalisation process via language use mainly applied different frameworks, including 'capital', 'sinophone', 'cosmopolitanism' and 'multiculturalism' theories. According to the analysis of empirical data, this study suggests that these frameworks were either unsuitable to be used to analyse the school-aged Chinese Australians' Chinese language use – and how they become culturalised in this process – or were outdated for reflecting on the current cultural environment that they were living in. This study then proposed the 'dual-track culturalisation' theoretical framework to analyse this issue, which is logically successive and systematic.

This section firstly points out why the existing frameworks were not suitable to guide this issue and then clarifies the innovation of the current conceptual framework. As the typical perspectives of utilitarianism, the concept of capital has been widely used in many of the social science studies, including immigrants' attitude to language maintenance. Similarly, Norton's 'investment' theory was also applied in the studies of the Chinese diaspora and their language use. These concepts emphasised the utilitarianism of immigrants' efforts in

connecting with the home culture, while ignoring the cultural aspect of benefits and their uncertain and unsafe psychological status. They simplified language as a symbol to measure one's cultural belonging, while failing to consider immigrants', especially Chinese immigrants', special characteristics. They learn and use the Chinese language possibly due to the cultural maintenance, or due to collectivism, which has been neglected in the studies from a utilitarian perspective.

Cosmopolitanism has been used in many studies to explain immigrants' situations. However, it overly emphasises immigrants' undifferentiated psychological belonging to different cultures and the harmony and integration of different ethnic groups (Gall, 2015). Similar unsuitability was also found in the application of multiculturalism, which overly compartmentalises cultures of ethnic minorities and overlooks the equality between so-called mainstream and minority cultures. These two perspectives, though reasonable to some extent, failed to balance the culture and language of host country and home country for immigrants, which are not appropriate to guide this thesis. Another explanation, sinophone, is specifically applied to Chinese immigrants and their Chinese-language use and cultural consumption. Nevertheless, this concept is much more like a descriptive method than a systematic and critically theoretical analysis.

Therefore, this study tried to overcome the shortcomings of the existing analytical concepts, providing its own innovative concept and theory, 'dual-track culturalisation', to examine the main research question of this thesis. It emphasises the balance and impartiality between culture and language of both host country and home country from the 'dual-track' viewpoint, arguing that two sides of culture and language have influence on immigrant children's culturalisation process at a similar level. The reason that this conceptual framework applies 'culturalisation' rather than other concepts such as 'enculturation', 'acculturation' and

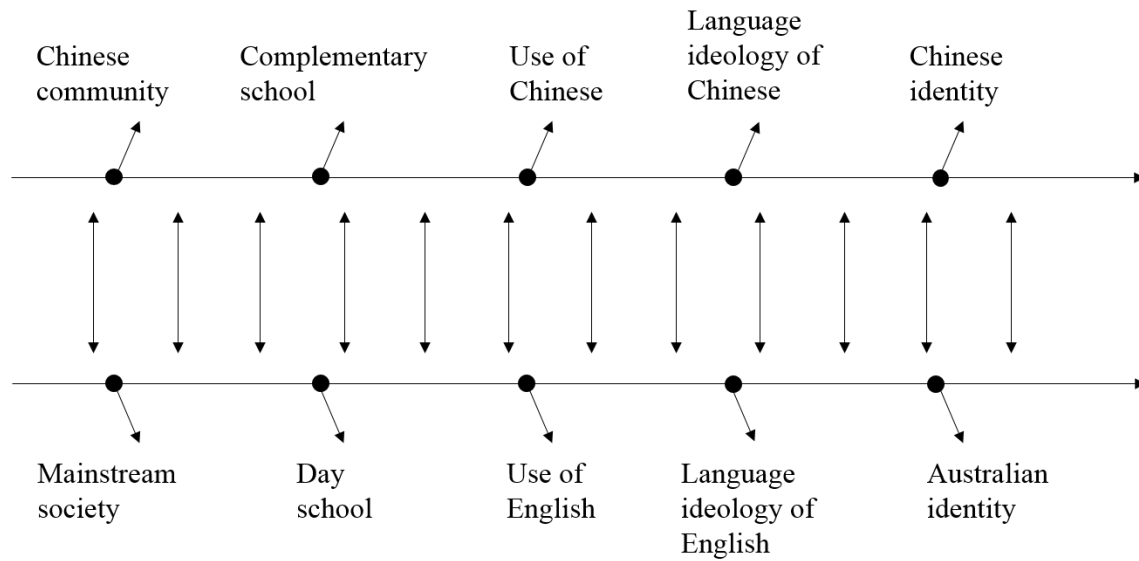
‘inculturation’, has been analysed in Section 2.1.1 of Chapter 2. The concept ‘culturalisation’ that has been used in this study does not overemphasise individuals’ adapting process of transforming from one culture to another; rather, it values the process itself. By combining ‘dual-track’ and ‘culturalisation’, this framework explains that these children and adolescents live in a dual-track cultural environment and they become culturalised by dual cultures, side by side.

### **8.2.2 Dual-track structure**

In addition to conceptual contribution, this theoretical framework also contributes to understanding immigrant children and adolescents’ language use and their identity into a logically systematic and successive structure. This is embodied in two ways: in parallel and interactive tracks as well as in a mutually influential cycle in most cases.

#### **8.2.2.1 A parallel and interactive structure**

Based on the analysis of data, this theoretical framework suggests that the current generation of school-aged Chinese Australians lives in dual-track cultural environments and what they experience happens in these two spaces. As demonstrated in Figure 8.1, there are five points in each track of the process. These five points are experienced by these children successively and mutually influence each other.



**Figure 8.1 Interactions in the dual-track culturalisation processes**

*Source: Proposed by the author based on the fieldwork conducted in multiple schools.*

According to Figure 8.1, the beginning point on the first track is Chinese community, which refers to the living environment that separates it from the mainstream society. Within this ethnic community, Chinese children's life trajectory is relatively complete in terms of being overseas Chinese, including in physical and mental aspects. Children can study, communicate, consume, and relax in a relatively comfortable condition. This point provides the basic environment for the following acts. Within the Chinese community, these children and adolescents learn the Chinese language in Chinese community school and some of them even apply what they learn in the Chinese class in their exam and choose Chinese as one of the subjects when they attend VCE courses, as the second point indicates. The third point shows what happens outside the scope of the classroom and focuses on how they use Chinese language beyond the school. Through their use of Chinese language, their Chinese acquisition, which is a casual form of language learning, is promoted. Through being immersed in the Chinese community, learning and using Chinese language, these children and adolescents form their perception of the language they learn and use, which refers to the

language ideologies and their cultural identity, which are indicated as the fourth point and fifth point.

Since what happens in the English track is similar to what happens within the Chinese track, this section does not extend its explanation of the English track in detail. Though children experience two sets of culturalisation through their bilingual use in dual tracks, this does not necessarily mean that there is no interaction between experiences in dual tracks. Rather, this study suggests that what happens in one track influences children's perception of the other and they negotiate and navigate between dual languages and dual cultures, as shown in Figure 8.1.

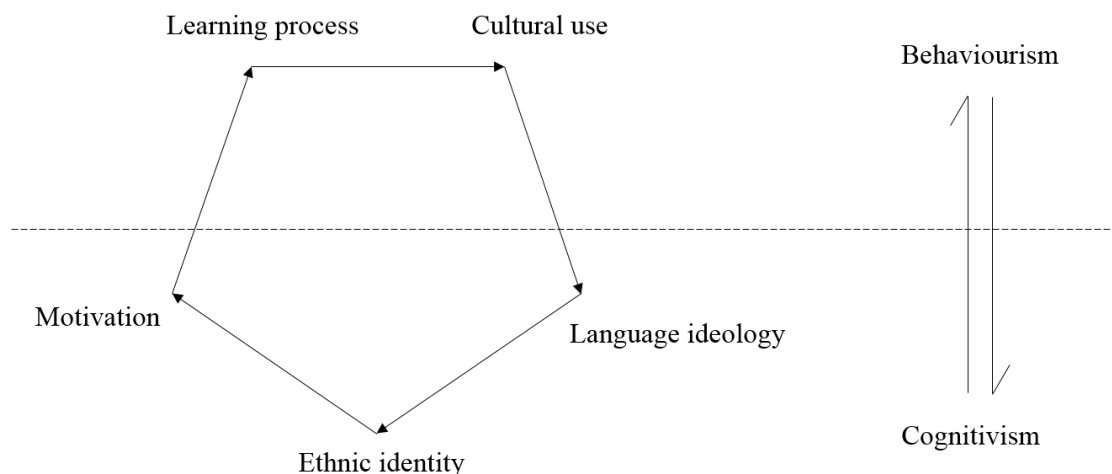
This dual-track framework connects objective cultural and language environment with children's subjectivity in language practices and cognition development. As shown in Figure 8.1, since dual-track culturalisation is procedural and dynamic, it has no endpoint. However, in the short term this culturalisation process is ended temporarily by the bilingual skills the school-aged Chinese Australians develop and the hybridity that they identify themselves as. Their bilingual skills and bicultural competency help them easily understand the symbols that represent events, feelings, beliefs and identities in dual cultural contexts and help them switch between two cultural settings seamlessly.

#### **8.2.2.2 Behaviours versus cognition**

Apart from the dual-track perspective, this framework also considers both behaviourism and cognitivism, which usually are seen as opposites in social psychology. Behaviourism emphasises the behaviour of humans and identifies thinking as a kind of behaviour, while cognitivism values the way humans think and proposes that thinking influences how people respond in action. However, considering the high level of reflexivity of children in this research, this framework suggests that behaviourism and cognitivism mutually influence each

other in Chinese-Australian children’s negotiation between dual language and dual culturalisation.

As Figure 8.2 indicates, motivation is the starting point and also the ending point of the entire process. Due to whatever motives – instrumentally, culturally or collectively – school-aged Chinese Australians learn and use the Chinese language, which implies behaviourism in this process. The learning and using behaviours are the representation of why and what they think about language and themselves. To respond to their inner thoughts regarding Chinese language, their bilingual skills and the dual identities, consciously and subconsciously, they act through behaviours of language learning and using. With the change of their cognition, their behaviours change.



**Figure 8.2 Behaviours versus cognition**

*Source: Proposed by the author based on the fieldwork conducted in multiple schools.*

In contrast, at another component of this process, their perceptions of language and identity are cornerstones in the development of their cognition regarding bilingual skills. The positive attitude towards Chinese language and the influence that Chinese language skills bring to these children’s cultural identity also influence their motivations to learn and use Chinese,

which closes this circle at the beginning point, motivation. Language ideologies, cultural identity and motivations jointly contribute to developing children's cognition, which is emphasised in cognitivism. As the representation of cognition, behaviours of Chinese language practices also influence their cognition. This is always embodied in frequent and high-quality behaviours of learning and using Chinese, not only to develop their language skills, but to help build up their language ideologies and identification, which stimulate their continuous behaviours of language practices. Therefore, this framework suggests that behaviourism and cognitivism in this research are mutually influential.

### **8.2.3 Significance of the theoretical framework**

The above sections identify the conceptual and structural contribution of the 'dual-track culturalisation framework' in this study. This section further demonstrates the possibilities of application of this framework in other studies, which could confirm its significance in theoretical debates.

First, this study applies the dual-track culturalisation framework in analysing school-aged Chinese Australians' culturalisation process through language practices. As analysed in the whole thesis, the Chinese track and the Australian track keep balanced due to the influence of the Chinese culture and Australia's increasing exposure to Asia. This is the special characteristic of Chinese-Australian children and adolescents. The number of international migrants in the world is roughly 250 million (Statham, 2018), and only some of them experience the power-matched dual-track culturalisations of Chinese Australians. It is not the case that all international migrants experience the dual-track culturalisation process. For example, some migrants, whose mother culture is marginalised in the host country, are likely to be influenced more by the host culture. For studies on immigrants whose dual tracks are not balanced, no matter whether the culture of the home country or host country is more

influential, this framework is applicable to analyse their negotiation between cultures and languages.

Second, from the longitudinal perspective, the application of this framework could not be limited in analysing second-generation immigrants' culturalisation process. Rather, we can extend its application to studies on first- and third-generation immigrants. By applying this dual-track perspective, studies on other generations of immigrants can examine the influence of dual-track cultures and language and can compare their dual-track culturalisation process with second-generation immigrants' culturalisation process.

Finally, from a transverse perspective, this framework could not only be used in the discussion regarding international immigrants, but also be employed in any other studies on humans who experience cultural tension and cultural integration among more than one culture or one country. Dual-track culturalisation happens much more frequently in contemporary society, with human mobility on a massive scale. Humans may experience culture and language difference of different places during their movement. Even in the same country, the local culture and language vary according to geography. This theoretical framework thus could be widely employed in the culturalisation process of many groups of people, such as domestic rural-to-urban migration or return migration, employing how language and other factors promote humans' culturalisation in dual tracks.

### **8.3 Practical implications for studies in related fields**

The above summary and discussion of findings and contributions indicates that this research regarding Chinese language use by school-aged Chinese Australians is more than a traditional topic examining the immigrants' language acquisition. Rather, this research takes into consideration social changes happening in both host country and sending country, examining Australian children and adolescents with Chinese ethnicity's language practices and their

culturalisation process via language use. As both a multidisciplinary and an interdisciplinary study, it elaborated how these children as reflexive subjects respond to the change of social and cultural environment via language choice and use. Therefore, this research not only focuses on the debate on education of immigrant from the educational perspective, and on heritage language maintenance from a linguistic discipline perspective, but also participates in the discussion in the fields of sociology and ethnic studies. Following are implications that this research provides for studies in the related disciplines.

### **8.3.1 Sociology of migration**

Rather than focusing on the ontology of language, this research situates itself in the field of sociology, exploring why and how children in Australia with Chinese background complete dual-track culturalisation through their language learning and using behaviours. It considers this group of children as the doers of the actions, examining how they respond to social change and how they reflect on language and themselves. It has implications for the debates in sociology of migration, mainly in the two sub-topics, behaviours of young immigrants and culturalisation process.

First, this research suggested that school-aged immigrants and their families make the decision to learn and use the Chinese language as a kind of collectivism, which provided a new explanation for the immigrants' behaviours regarding language choice and maintenance. In previous studies utilitarianism and cultural attachment were two main threads used to explain why international immigrants keep and develop their heritage language skills. Heritage language maintenance could bring benefits in many aspects. This study represents the first attempt to re-examine the motivation behind their behaviours and suggests that Chinese families in Australia insist their children learn and maintain the Chinese language partly due to the conformity to community practices rather than deep consideration about the

benefits. The new Chinese immigrants were disconnected from their home culture by the departure from China, and this movement made them feel a sense of uncertainty and a lack of safety in the new socio-cultural environment. To avoid uncertainty and to obtain psychological safety, they follow what their peers do, including in the aspect of language choice. However, this communitywide practice that emerges in a spontaneous way has been ignored in the existing literature on immigrant families' decision-making process regarding their children's language practices.

Though the behaviour of following community practice was applied in the human migration studies that described and analysed the behaviours of people who left mother lands and started new lives in host lands (Kleist & Thorsen, 2016), this study is the first attempt to apply this theory to explain immigrant families' language choice and language practices. This contribution offers a new lens to consider the motivations and the social behaviours of groups of individuals navigating from one society to another, from one culture to another.

Second, this research puts forward a new perspective to explain how immigrant children and adolescents use language to complete their culturalisation process, intentionally or subconsciously. It is the 'dual-track culturalisation framework'. Guided by this framework, this research clarifies the interactions between the special cultural environment, Chinese language as heritage language, and school-aged Chinese Australians. The specific significance of this theoretical framework in various aspects has been analysed in Section 8.2. It contributes to understanding why and how language works in the culturalisation process for people negotiating more than one language and one culture. They could be first-generation immigrants like Chinese parents in this research, second-generation immigrants like Chinese children in this research, or any other individuals undergoing movement and dual-track

cultural and lingual experience. In this increasingly globalised world, such framework could help understand future human societies.

### **8.3.2 Ethnic and migration studies**

Immigrants are regarded as ‘in-between’ subjects in many previous studies (Wang, 2016b; Ang, 2001). As a study focusing on second-generation immigrant children, this research is concerned with how these young global citizens have been influenced by multiple cultural traditions and how they form and reconstruct their identity via their language use. An important contribution that this thesis makes is that it considers the multidimensionality of cultural identity and clarifies that ethnicity issues could not be simplified and discussed within either dimension.

Rather than coming to a conclusion about which ethnic group these children belong to, and to what extent they acknowledge their Chineseness and Australianness, which should be a life-long process, this research emphasises the importance of multidimensional perspective in understanding immigrants’ cultural identity through the systematic and comprehensive debates regarding Chinese heritage language’s role in this process. Though this research finding is based on the data analysis of Chinese language use by Chinese immigrant children and adolescents, this point of view could go beyond one particular community and be shared by discussions about other issues regarding ethnicity and migration.

In addition, based on the general observations of the Chinese community in Australia, personal experience of children and adolescents is also a factor that influences their perceptions by themselves and by others. Applying the multidimensional perspective that this study employs, young immigrants’ personal experience influences themselves in multiple dimensions and aspects of ethnic and cultural identity, self-identification and observed identity, for example. If the family environment for Chinese cultural immersion is supportive,

the child should have more opportunities to know and understand Chinese culture, and might go to China more frequently than others. This offers the child more time, space and chances to examine who they are. If a child is perceived to attend a great range of Chinese community activities and to visit China more frequently than other children, this child might be perceived to have stronger Chineseness than others. This example is just a preliminary attempt to explain these children's ethnicity with consideration of their personal experience. The key point is that a multidimensional perspective is important for us to understand immigrants' cultural and ethnic identity.

With the awareness of the existence of multiple dimensions of cultural and ethnic identity, the inconsistency among multiple dimensions of identity is not easy to ignore. Though in this research the roles that Chinese language plays in different dimensions of identity are inconsistent, this does not necessarily lead to continuous inconsistencies among different dimensions when discussions divert to other factors. In the example of personal experience, its role in the formation of identity by self and by others might be the same, and that is to strengthen children's cultural attachment to a certain culture by increasing the exposure to cultural activities, no matter whether in the dimension of self-identification or observed identity. Therefore, the emphasis on the multidimensionality of ethnicity contributes to our understanding of the complexity of ethnicity and to the future discussion regarding ethnic issues.

### **8.3.3 Language and communication**

This research suggests that language is a medium through which children are trained and socialised. Since heritage language is one of the keywords in this thesis, this study, though situated mainly in the discipline of applied sociological studies, also applied and re-examined some theories and concepts of linguistics and communication to support the arguments. The

findings of this research contribute to theoretically extending existing scholarship of language ideologies of bilingual children and their language use in communication and cultural consumption. The findings also empirically confirm the application of existing theories on bilingual children, such as language transfer and language distance.

Though the changing cultural environments at both macro and micro levels were considered to influence children's perception of bilingualism in this research, children's subjectivity and reflexivity were highlighted and valued as well. This study emphasises children and adolescents' agency in forming their perceptions of language skills and language development, and suggests that future studies in the field of sociolinguistics and language ideologies should consider the reflexivity of language learners and users.

Language in communication and cultural consumption is a hotly debated topic in the field of language and communication. This research elaborated that school-aged Chinese Australians as a self-controlled mechanism could switch between languages seamlessly, according to different social settings. This research finding sheds light on the mechanisms of language choice by bilingual subjects and offers theoretical debates on the encoding/decoding mode of communication.

In addition, this study provides some empirical discussion regarding the applications of language distance and language transfer. Through comparing the distance between Chinese and English, this research points to the practical difficulties for these children to learn and use the Chinese language, which rarely appeared in the existing literature, since previous academic attention was on Chinese language as a second language rather than heritage language. This offers future studies on heritage language acquisition some empirical experience.

### **8.3.4 Education of migrant children**

Since the research objects in this thesis are school-aged Chinese Australians, many may locate this research within the scope of education. The main discussion chapters were neither analysed from educational perspectives nor applied theories of education. However, considering the empirical data analysis of immigrant children of Chinese background in the immigrant society in Australia, this research still has some implications for the field of education of migrant children.

On the one hand, Chapter 4 provides some pedagogical suggestions for Chinese language education outside Chinese-speaking areas. For example, by highlighting the unbalanced ability in speaking, listening, writing and reading, this thesis calls for attention to the writing skills of Chinese immigrant children. Second, this study suggests cultural immersion as a pedagogical approach to be employed within and outside Chinese classes, to develop Chinese immigrant children and adolescents' Chinese skills. Compared with approaches emphasising ontological teaching, a cultural immersion approach seems to be much more attractive to language learners.

On the other hand, this study also has implications for language policymakers, who are also closely related to language education. By pointing out the significant decrease in Chinese language learners in the intermediate levels, this study suggests that some incentives should be considered and given to the language learners in this stage. They need help to go through the most difficult stage in the Chinese language learning process. Policies to support children and adolescents who do not want to choose heritage language as a subject in VCE, but hope to maintain the heritage language capacity, should be formulated.

## 8.4 Limitations and future studies

The current research inevitably entails a few limitations that should be taken into account when setting a path for future studies on immigrants' culturalisation, by both home culture and host culture via language practices. First, PhD research is required to be finished within four years in my university, which leads to the limited time period for the researcher to conduct fieldwork. Though the participant observations and interviews in this research lasted for more than two years, which is a relatively long period, it might not provide a fuller picture of future dynamics on this issue. By involving interviewees at different ages and from different grades, this thesis aimed to provide a relatively full picture of the dynamics of these children's language use over time. However, whether the group of children in higher grades in these two years are able to represent the children who will be in higher grades ten years later could not be fully discussed in this research.

Second, this research was conducted against the backdrop of the economic growth of China and Australia's increasing exposure to Asia, especially Australia's dependence on China's economic growth and market. Chinese families in the Chinese community in Australia made the decision to send their children to learn and use the Chinese language and help them create a supportive environment for language practices and cultural immersion, partly due to the broad environment mentioned above. This also influences how children form their language ideologies and their self-perception. However, a number of tensions emerged between the two countries by the time this research was almost finished, and Chinese-Australian relations indeed have had a rollercoaster time recently. It is regretful that this research could not follow up this change and its influence on Chinese immigrants' choice and attitude on Chinese language maintenance as a heritage language.

Third, limitations of this research also come from the fact that analysis from more perspectives could be involved in this research to help build up the arguments and theoretical framework. On one hand, the Chinese community where these children live and grow up is a complex community that involves immigrants from different regions and social classes. Consideration about this complexity is not enough when this study forms the arguments. On the other hand, opinions from Australians outside the Chinese community are also important when we examine the issue of immigrants' culturalisation and socialisation, especially the issue of reflected identity. However, this study involves few viewpoints from non-Chinese people who have for years been influenced by a strong Sinophobia, which opens up possibilities for further research.

The final remark of this thesis is to suggest directions for future studies on immigrant children's dual-track culturalisation via language practices. Bearing in mind the limitations mentioned above, this study has three suggestions for future research. The first suggestion for future research is long-term observations and analysis based on longitudinal fieldwork should be seriously considered and undertaken. Due to the reality of the time constraint, the data collection in this research lasted only about two years. Fieldwork, especially participant observation, on this issue is strongly called for in future studies. Such longitudinal fieldwork and data analysis could provide in-depth insight into immigrants' culturalisation and socialisation process, explanations of immigrants' behaviours, policy on immigrant education, and more.

The second suggestion of this study is research from different perspectives and involving informants from more diverse backgrounds should be conducted. For example, future studies could take variables such as socio-economic status, place of origin, and family's culture inclination into consideration when discussing immigrant children's heritage language

practices. Moreover, other issues, such as impacts of anti-China sentiment in Australia or social tensions in the host country on immigrants' language choice need further discussion.

The third and last suggestion is as the introductory chapter illustrated, this thesis mainly focused on second-generation and 1.75-generation immigrant children, while excluding 1.25-generation immigrant children, who share fewer similarities with their second-generation counterparts. However, this study paid little attention to third-generation immigrant children. This could include children who are third-generation immigrant children in the current stage and children who are the offspring of the research objectives in this research. From the analysis in Chapter 3 we know that many of the children learn Chinese language because of a decision made by their whole family. However, it is interesting to speculate on when these children grow up and become parents decades later, what decision regarding their children's language development they would like to make. Are they willing to help their children maintain Chinese heritage language as their parents did? Do third-generation Chinese immigrant children also experience dual-track culturalisation like their second-generation immigrant parents? To answer these questions, further investigation and analysis are required.

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