8 A Tangled Tale

This book has been about one group of individuals and their families who have experienced changes in their language choices and language uses over a sustained period of time as they relocated themselves from China to the U.S. I have refrained from attributing heritage language shift directly and, perhaps, simplistically to immigration and globalization, from isolating language attitude (Gardner, 1985) as an exclusively psychological construct, and from abstracting language shift from situated interpersonal engagements. Instead, I have explored how macro-level social changes such as immigration and globalization have come to be lived, everyday communicative experiences in the lives of individual persons and their families. I have also attempted to go beyond synchronic static snapshots of language choice and language use to examine practices of linguistic repertoires in socio-politico-historically configured timespace. Rather than using census data, questionnaires, or surveys covering large populations, I have focused on a small number of speakers and used what I call a *serial narrative-ethnographic* (SNE) method for gathering and evaluating data on language shifts that take place in specific speakers and settings. With a phenomenological objective of understanding persons and their behavior through the activities in which they engage, I delineated the relationship between the ways in which speakers frame their lives and enact their identities, as well as the kinds of decisions they make about their languages, viz., whether to replace one language with another in daily communication or to oscillate along a bilingual continuum. In other words, I have focused on the shift of the speakers' projected and perceived identities as their immigration experiences unfold as a way to gain insight into language shift. The collection of stories of how those projections and perceptions are both codified in and mediated through dynamic language choices and language use highlights the convergence and conflicts between heritage language and mainstream societal language, compromises between different communicative needs, the choices and styles of different generations, and continuity between different speech roles required for the same participants in different, sometimes simultaneous, sometimes consecutive, discourse contexts.

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The stories of different CHL speakers at different life stages have been presented in both the way they were told and the way they were lived. These stories are intended to give prominence to the interconnected and collective meanings of life histories and life experiences of CHL speakers with respect to their language trajectories. It is not our goal to capture and describe every possible kind of CHL speaker. In fact, research has shown that using an ethnic language takes on different meanings for ethnic groups of different social status (Blommaert, 2010; Canagarajah, 2013; De Fina, 2007; Pennycook, 2010) and functions differently for different purposes, even for the same speakers at different stages of life (He, 2011a). Every immigrant experience creates a pattern of its own and is always and forever a part of other narratives. One individual's story of language and life can be another individual's mirror and metaphor. It is in this sense that we may vicariously insert ourselves into the lives of others to seek relevance and references. These stories are one version of one set of stories of many possible versions of heritage language stories (Li, 2016; Tan, 2013) within the broader context of immigrants and the languages they bring with them. They are significant only when embedded within the epic narrative of human multilingualism, migration, mobility, and our ability to adapt and evolve.

In the absence of a consummate, unifying theory of language change and language shift, I have attempted to provide some empirical evidence and weave it together through a reasoned, re-storied long narrative with multiple participants, multiple practices, multiple perspectives, multiple data sources, and multiple data types. The actual story may elude comprehension or common sense, but it forces us to rethink how we look at language, heritage, and identity.

8.1 Lessons from the Narratives

Now we are ready to address the questions we raised at the beginning of this book: what is happening to the Chinese language that Chinese immigrants have brought to the U.S.? Why and how does language shift happen in the context of immigration? What are the implications of these narratives about languages and lives in the context of immigration for language shift?

The term *immigrant language* suggests an element of ambiguity at the surface level of meaning. It could refer to the languages that immigrants take with them from their places of origin as they move elsewhere and/or the languages that immigrants use (including both the languages they take from their places of origin and the new languages they have acquired) in the context of immigration – in other words, the entire linguistic repertoire of immigrants. Whichever the case, the emergence, maintenance (or attrition), and/or shift of immigrant languages is inevitably and critically interwoven with the retention, rejection, and/or transformation of the cultural identities of the immigrants.

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Today, given the relative ease of transportation and communication, many immigrants maintain (close) ties – familial, financial, cultural, and, yes, linguistic – with their places of origin and between the scattered groups themselves. Information is constantly and instantaneously transmitted and circulated across various spaces and different time zones, in languages and dialects in the linguistic repertoire that is shared by those who have moved elsewhere (the diaspora) and those who have stayed behind (the domestic). Immigrant languages may thus include features both from the languages the immigrants carry with them from their places of origin and from the languages of their places of settlement. When today's immigrants articulate their cultural identities and affinities, some measure of shared sociocultural and linguistic experience becomes as important as some shared geographical places of origin. In our case, Chinese immigrants to the U.S. try to modulate both Chinese and English into forms of expression which give meaning to their existence in the diaspora and to discursively construct a hyphenated *Chinese-American* identity to bring continuity and coherence to their cultural and linguistic selves and communities. Furthermore, the Chinese language is used not merely for purposes of nostalgia and of maintaining values and practices of the past, but also for purposes of constructing the here and now, and a re-envisioned future.

Research on immigration languages has traditionally revolved around the interplay between a fixed geographical homeland, the migration of its population to new destinations, and the cultural and linguistic practices associated with these individuals in their new contexts. The concept of *diaspora* has long been anchored in the notions of homeland, exile, and return, portraying diasporic phenomena as static and territorially bound. However, contemporary scholars have turned their attention to the cultural and linguistic transformations of migrant populations in their new places of resettlement and the racio-ideological nature of diasporic experience. This change in focus is exemplified in recent studies on the characteristics of "superdiversity" (Blommaert and Rampton, 2011) and the sociocultural definition of "diaspora language," "domestic language," and "foreign language" (Flores and Rosa, 2015). It is within this context that we endeavor to interpret the narratives presented in our study.

First and foremost, the question concerning the efficacy of heritage language maintenance is not amenable to a singular, unequivocal answer. Each sociocultural variable scrutinized within the diverse narratives under consideration in this book possesses the inherent capacity to exert either a constructive or a deleterious influence upon the maintenance of linguistic heritage. Language shift, observed through a rhizomatic lens, unfolds as a network of interwoven roots and shoots, defying hierarchical structures and displaying a decentralized, nonlinear pattern. Like a rhizome that extends in multiple directions, language shift is a product of multifaceted connections, where change can sprout in

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diverse and sometimes unexpected directions. Instead of being driven by a singular, centralized force, language shift emerges from the complex web of interactions among individual choices, family and community dynamics, and societal influences. It reflects and embodies diversity, adaptability, and the intricate relationships that sustain linguistic evolution, grounded in the interconnectedness of the rhizomatic network.

Our serial narrative ethnography shows that language shift within the CHL household can occur within one generation or across generations, with second-generation speakers adopting English more readily than the first generation. It also shows the importance of individual agency. Some individuals and families (such as Ben's) may actively choose to shift toward English, while others (such as Diana's and Emily's families) may continue to use the heritage language. It has demonstrated clearly that families and individuals will shift to an English-dominant repertoire or to English only for better job prospects, easier access to quality education, and greater personal safety and security, even if it means distancing themselves from their heritage language.

We have learned that language shift is closely tied to issues of cultural identity and social belonging. Individuals may shift or maintain their language repertoire based on their sense of identity, belonging to a particular community, or the perceived prestige and utility of the language. If the second generation does not see clear benefits or opportunities associated with Chinese language proficiency, they may become less motivated to maintain and develop their Chinese language skills. Negative stereotypes about Chinese language speakers and culture can lead to stigmatization and discrimination, eroding individuals' self-esteem and cultural identity, and consequently resulting in a reduced emphasis on maintaining CHL. The desire for cultural assimilation and the need to fit into American society lead many Chinese-Americans to downplay their Chinese culture and language in favor of embracing the English language and American culture.

We have also seen that workplace and school language policies, and the availability of government and societal support for minority languages, can have a significant impact on language maintenance or shift. Societal language ideologies that prioritize monolingualism over bilingualism can discourage the maintenance of heritage languages, including Chinese. Schools and workplaces reward proficiency in English and ridicule or marginalize those who speak English with a Chinese accent. Stereotypical or limited portrayals of Chinese language and culture in school curricula, media, and popular culture can reinforce biases and negatively influence how Chinese-Americans and their language are perceived. As a result, Chinese-Americans such as Felix feel pressure to speak "standard" American English to conform to societal norms and expectations, which can contribute to language shift away from Chinese.

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And finally, we have seen that language shift is not irreversible. As in the case of Felix and Christine, revitalization efforts on the part of individuals or changes in the social, political, or economic context such as the Black Lives Matter movement and resurfaced anti-Asian racism during the COVID-19 global pandemic can lead to a re-emergence of a previously neglected or abandoned heritage language.

However, there remain many unknowns, uncertainties, and ambiguities, in terms of the exact nature of the impact of the first generation's experiences, perspectives, practices, and aspirations on the second generation's language choice. Let us delve deeper into the intricate influence of first-generation language use at home, their language ideology, their cultural values, and the Chinese language school – an expansive collective endeavor by the first generation aimed at preserving Chinese heritage for their children.

In terms of language practice, first-generation Chinese-Americans' interactions with their children, the second generation, often set the stage for language transmission. If the first generation actively uses Chinese at home and values its importance, it is more likely that the second generation will be exposed to, acquire, and keep the language. This family language environment can be a key factor in language maintenance. On the other hand, first-generation Chinese-American parents may face challenges in maintaining the Chinese language themselves due to the dominant use of English in their workplace and daily interactions (as in the case of Ben and Felix). As a result, they may communicate bilingually in both English and Chinese at home or exclusively in English to their children, which can severely limit the exposure of the second generation to Chinese.

With respect to language ideology, many first-generation parents (all parents in this book except Emily's mother) believe that English proficiency is essential for their children's academic and career success and that the Chinese language is a source of discrimination and a barrier to assimilation and success in the U.S. As a result, they prioritize English language development over Chinese, especially after their children enter middle school, leading to reduced Chinese language use within the family and reduced or zero learning opportunities in Chinese language schools. In cases where first-generation parents experienced discrimination due to their own language traits (as is the case with Ben), that negative experience can create pressure for Chinese-Americans to assimilate into American culture and society, resulting in much reduced emphasis on maintaining Chinese as they seek acceptance and belonging. The first generation's desire for their children to excel in the majority culture in order to overcome discrimination (applicable to all parents in this book) can result in a preference for English as the dominant language within the family.

Chinese cultural values appear to be a double-edged sword. First-generation Chinese immigrants often bring with them strong cultural values and traditions,

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including the importance of relationships between families across generations, filial piety, and respect for elders. These values can be instilled in the second generation, reinforcing the significance of the Chinese language in maintaining family bonds and honoring these traditional values. Other values, however, may have a negative impact on the maintenance of CHL. For example, Chinese culture often places a high value on academic achievement and professional success, which creates immense pressure on second-generation Chinese-Americans. This pressure inevitably leads to prioritizing English language proficiency for educational success, while devaluing or neglecting the Chinese language. Furthermore, as we have seen in cases from the Chinese language school, some second-generation Chinese-Americans may feel that some Chinese cultural values are less relevant or practical to their daily lives in the United States, thus reducing the need for and interest in the Chinese language.

Perhaps the most significant effort that the first generation make for their children to learn and keep Chinese is to send them to weekend community-based Chinese language schools. While these schools can give many Chinese-American families some sense of solace, particularly in face of the challenges of teaching Chinese to the second generation at home, there are also negative impacts associated with them that can affect Chinese language maintenance. First, attending weekend Chinese language school requires a significant time commitment. For students, this can mean spending several hours every weekend in classes and on homework, which can limit their involvement in other activities and hobbies, as seen in the case of Chris. Second, weekend Chinese language schools often have academic expectations and classroom routines that are different from mainstream schools (as seen in Chapter 5). While weekend Chinese language schools provide an opportunity to learn the language, they may not offer the same level of social interaction that occurs in a full-time school environment. The cultural and linguistic generation gap can sometimes create tensions between children attending weekend Chinese language schools and their teachers, who may have different language-learning experiences and expectations (as explained by Wang *laoshi*). The pressure to adapt in these classes can be stressful for students, leading to a negative attitude toward Chinese language learning. Third, weekend Chinese language schools tend to emphasize traditional Chinese cultural values, which may not fully resonate with the cultural identity of second-generation Chinese-Americans. This disconnect can lead to disinterest in maintaining the language (as observed in Chris's class). Fourth, many students perceive weekend Chinese language school as a requirement imposed by their parents, rather than a personal choice, leading to the perception of learning Chinese as a chore, making it less enjoyable and less motivating for the second generation.

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8.1.1 Complex Repertoire Shift

The families whose stories are included in this book are among the millions who arrived from China, following the 1965 U.S. immigration law that lifted a century of restrictions against Asian immigrants to the United States. They came with little understanding of their new home, much less the history of "Asian America" that was supposed to define them. These individuals received college education in China and speak enough English for general work and life purposes, even though with distinct accents and conversational styles. While many of them provided opportunities and encouragement for their children to learn Chinese, few of them pressured their children to become fluent or functional in Chinese. Even though the English language and American life are new to these first-generation immigrant parents, they have no qualms about using the English they do command as part of their entire linguistic repertoire to effectively protect and promote their children's and their families' interests.

The CHL family is both local and global as a result of migration and frequent travel, as most clearly illustrated in Felix's case. The availability of internet and mobile phones has made it possible for immigrant family members to be simultaneously both separate and together, both here and there, both local and global. Additionally, CHL impacts not only the diasporic family members who immigrated to the U.S., but also the domestic ones who stayed put in China. Those who immigrated to the U.S. gave new definitions of "home," codified in their modified linguistic repertoires and transformed communicative styles. Those who stayed behind geographically also expanded their idea of a "home" that is no longer constrained by geographic borders. The lives of those who remained in China are also changed and implicated by the diversity in the same, albeit geographically dispersed, family. Family members are speaking different languages or the same language with different levels of proficiency and experiencing vicariously the lives of their family members in the U.S. via instant digital communication. It is the concept of *homeland* from which diaspora derives. However, in all of our cases, returning to the place of origin is clearly not our participants' ultimate goal, or even their desire or imagination. To our research participants and many others like them who have chosen to leave China for the U.S. and elsewhere globally, diaspora no longer has a static and stable trait tied to the "homeland" or the past with nostalgia. They are "at home" in diaspora (Kuah-Pearce and Davison, 2008). They stay current with people and events in the "homeland" and keep those in the "homeland" current with their lives, work, or study. In other words, rather than "leaving" the "homeland," they have blurred the blended boundaries between countries and cultures.

As richly illuminated by Andrew and Angela's grandmother and Chris's teacher Wang *laoshi*, multiple practices of Chinese language and culture

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associated with different historical time periods and the nonlinear progression of China's history require that the first-generation immigrants pick, choose, and improvise what and which version to impart to the next generation in the U.S. What has remained the "same" has taken on different sounds and significance. Of all CHL-speaking children in the database, with the rare exception of two cases, all have taken on anglicized first names and many parents have also taken on anglicized aliases. The family names have remained the same in romanized phonetic writing but now have an anglicized pronunciation – 张 *Zhang*, the voiceless retroflex sibilant affricate in the initial position of the syllable turns into a voiceless alveolar affricate *Zang*; 刘 *Liu*, a diphthong in the final position of the syllable, turns into a high back rounded vowel *Loo* – with tones erased and consonants and vowels that do not fit the English phonemic repertoire modified. In everyday interactions, when the first generation switch to English exclusively and interact with 美国人*meiguoren* (Americans – meaning non-Chinese Americans), they tend to become more reserved, more cautious, more guarded. For the second generation, on the other hand, it is when they speak with 叔叔阿姨 *shushu ayi* ("uncles and aunties," i.e., their parents' Chinese friends) that they become stuttering and faltering as they struggle with their Chinese, with segmental features such as consonantal contrast that betray their heritage-speaking status (Chang et al., 2009). Festivals are now reimagined and reinvented. On Thanksgiving Day, stuffed inside the turkey are glutinous rice, water chestnuts, rehydrated dried mushrooms, and Chinese sausages. Chinese New Year dinners include lasagna as a main dish and cheesecakes as part of the dessert.

We have also seen that the close association of heritage language with the "home" preferences and practices makes the heritage language and culture a constantly moving target. The home languages that CHL children grow up hearing are an evolving linguistic repertoire, as the family's immigration experience unfolds. Over time, Andrew and Angela communicated (to a limited extent) with their grandmother in Chinese and with their parents primarily in English, as their mother Meiping found it more and more natural and necessary to mix English with the Chinese she spoke at home. Ben was speaking English at home almost exclusively as his parents Jane and John separated Chinese language from Chinese culture and endorsed the parents-speaking-Chinese and child-speaking-English family communication pattern. Chris resisted his mother Wenxiu's attempt to teach him Chinese, so much so that Wenxiu's attitude and practice evolved from insistence on Chinese to abandonment of Chinese at home. Diana and Emily had grown into fully fluent and confident English speakers and developed an acute awareness as well as a deep appreciation of the linguistic conditions of their parents, who reverted to speaking more Chinese at home and relied more on the daughters to translate and interpret, even though their own English was functional to begin with and

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became even stronger over time. For Felix, "heritage language" included the languages he was exposed to not only at home in the U.S. but also abroad in China in his parents' hometowns. While he was reclaiming his Chinese linguistic and ethnic identity, he faced anti-Asian hate during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as his mother Xiaofei's new cautionary stance on speaking Chinese in public.

Consequently, this evolving linguistic repertoire is characterized by multi-performance (He, 2013b), translanguaging (Li, 2014), and transcripting (Li and Zhu, 2018). For example, New Year's greetings have taken on a fusional flavor. CHL speakers enjoy the expression Happy Niu Year, said and written at the beginning of the Year of the Ox, substituting *new* with *niu* (the romanized phonetic annotation of 牛 *niu* ("ox")). Just as one utilizes all semiotic tools and modalities such as language structure, prosody as well as gesture in the production of meaning (Enfield, 2009; Li, 2011), here, multiple source languages are used to create composite meanings that are simultaneously evocative of multiple cultures and multiple contexts.

Another example of multi-performance and translanguaging comes from Felix's CHL language class in college, where two students are discussing ways to turn a traditional Chinese character (*fantizi*, used primarily in Taiwan) into its simplified version (*jiantizi*, adopted mainly in mainland China).

Student1: 怎么 sim-p[e]-li-fy?
zenme
Q-how
How to simplify?
((pause))
Student2: 这已经很 sim-ple 了.
zhe yijing hen simple le
this already very simple PRT
This is already very simple
(.2)
sim-p[e]-li-不 -f(hh)y 了 hhehahahehh!!
Sim-p[e]-li-bu-f(hh)y le
simpli-NEG-fy PRT
Cannot simplify anymore

The first student questions "how to simplify" by using the Chinese question marker *zenme* 怎么 ("how") and the English root verb *simplify*. What is noteworthy is not merely that an English root verb is employed the same way the equivalent Chinese verb would have been (without inflections), but also that the delivery of *simplify* by the first student is such that it sounds like a Chinese word: the original initial stress in the English word is erased. The word is produced as four separate monosyllabic parts, each with a tonal quality: [*sim*]

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with a high flat tone, [*pe*] with a high flat tone (a schwa is inserted after the [p] sound to satisfy the Chinese consonant + vowel syllable structure), [*li*] with a high falling tone, and [*fy*] with high falling tone. In response, the second student also embeds an English lexical item in his utterance, this time the adjective *simple*. Similar to what the first student did, the second student also maximally integrates *simple* in the Chinese environment both syntactically, by preserving the Chinese intensifier *hen* 很 ("very") before *simple* and change-of-state particle *le* after it, and phonetically, by delivering *simple* as two adjacent but independent units, [*sim*] with high flat tone and [*ple*] with falling rise tone. (S2 is a heritage speaker of Cantonese and his rendering of *simple* is reminiscent of the prosodic contours in Cantonese.) Up to this point, both students have successfully incorporated an English verb and an English adjective in a Chinese utterance at both the morphophonemic and the syntactic levels. What happens next is that the second student takes it one step further and draws the conclusion that the character cannot be simplified any more. He does so by truncating the English verb *simplify* into four monosyllabic, tonal units (as the first student did in the first turn) and inserting the Chinese negator 不 *bu* ("not") in the middle, thereby imitating a Chinese-sounding morphological construction: verb + negative potential marker infix + verb complement. It is evident that this creative blending is accomplished spontaneously as the student seems to be surprised and amused by his own utterance and starts laughing before the syllable [*fy*] with high falling tone is completed.

Such common, cohesive, and creative mutual laminating between Chinese and English by CHL speakers cannot be explained in terms of linguistic inadequacy in either one of the two languages; or change of addressee, topic, communicative setting, or purpose; or conversation-sequential contingencies. It is the speakers' simultaneous and spontaneous access to both languages that gives rise to their "multi-performance" (He, 2013b), which portrays themselves as simultaneously both Chinese and American, both the other and the self, both recognizable and transformed from either perspective. As multiple language sources invoke specific situations and backgrounds (Gafaranga, 2011; Li, 2011; Li and Zhu, 2010), multi-performance makes possible original, creative utterances with structural transformations and transpositions that enable CHL speakers to celebrate new forms, new possibilities and new energies created therein (Li, 2011), while extending to CHL speakers a wider range of transcultural identity options. The absence of a discernible matrix language, base language, or dominant language in such practices reconstructs the fluidity and heterogeneity in the identity and community of CHL speakers. Furthermore, multi-performance provides linguistic and discursive space for CHL speakers to use the optimal elements and aspects of each language from their entire linguistic repertoire and to work to the exclusion of elements and aspects with which they may be less familiar and in which they may be less

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proficient. Multi-performance reminds us of what various scholars (e.g., Gafaranga, 2005) have argued, that there is no one-to-one correspondence between the speaker's identity and the choice of language (for example, the choice of the Chinese language cannot be equated with a choice of Chinese cultural identity); instead, it is the very act of shifting, mixing, and blending itself that points to patterns of identity construction.

Through these voices, we get a glimpse of the multilingual repertoire of contemporary Chinese diasporic persons, patterns of translation (of language and culture), ways of constructing personal and collective identities in various speech communities to which they have simultaneous access, efforts to learn Chinese-American history through visuals and texts, and the desire to construct memory and write history for future generations. Language ideology refers to our mental models that connect specific types of linguistic choices and forms with specific groups of people who stereotypically use them. It focuses on the symbiotic existence/production of linguistic and social categories, as in the case of the "one-language/one-dialect–one-people–one-place" assumption. The voices and perspectives presented in this book compel us to rethink such one-on-one mapping and to take into serious consideration the multiple scales in what Lemke (2002) calls "the social ecology of learning," where dynamic speaker identities are formed and transformed through choices of languages, dialects, registers, and styles on a moment-by-moment, topic-by-topic, task-by-task basis.

8.1.2 Different Paths

Language, naturally, is not everything. Beyond, beneath, embedded within language are the political economy and the material conditions of language choice and language use. The book began with an emphasis on the micro conditions for language shift; let us now consider the macro as well. The material aspects of language choice and language use, such as securing a good job or attending a good college, intersect with language ideology (hierarchizing Chinese and English in a certain way, valuing one language over the other), identity (中国人 *zhongguoren*, Chinese; 美国人 *meiguoren*, American; 华裔美国人 *huayi meiguoren*, Chinese-American; 美籍华人 *meiji huaren*, Chinese with American citizenship; or 旅美华侨 *lümei huaqiao*, Chinese sojourners living in America) and aspiration (whether to build a life based in the U.S., in China, or transnationally). Any consideration of language policy should consider the ecological coexistence of the political, social, economic, cultural, and material conditions and implications of language use since it has very concrete effects on our lives.

First-generation immigrants with functional English proficiency such as the parents in the households included in this book by and large prioritize the

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English language. For Andrew and Angela's parents Meiping and Donghua, the process of shifting toward English was gradual and unconscious. As Meiping put it, 不知不觉的就都讲英文了 *buzhibujue de jiu dou jiang yingwen le* ("Without knowing it, everyone started speaking English"). The shift from a Chinese-dominant repertoire to an English-dominant one started before immigration and accelerated in anticipation of the children's language needs outside the home. For Ben's parents Jane and John, the prioritization of English was deliberate and planned, after careful consideration of the costs and benefits. 来美国了, 那变化是必须的 *lai meiguo le, na bianhua shi bixue de* ("Since we came to the U.S., change is only expected"), John said. Chris's parents Wenxiu and Konstantin eventually gave up Chinese at home out of desperation, after experiencing failure of the "one-parent–one-language" policy and for fear of losing connection with Chris. Wenxiu lamented, 实在是没办法 *shizai shi mei banfa* ("There really is no other way"). Diane's parents and Emily's parents adopted a laissez-faire attitude. 在家想怎么说就怎么说, 随便! *zaijia xiang zeme shuo jiu zenme shuo, suibian* ("At home, use whatever language they wish, as they please!"), replied Emily's mom when I asked her about her family language policy. As a result, translanguaging practices are pervasive in these two households and Diana and Emily's Chinese language capability remained at a receptive level. Felix's parents Xiaofei and Weifeng were highly encouraging of their sons' learning and use of Chinese until COVID-19, when they felt the need to use English as self-protection against xenophobia and anti-Asian hate – 无论怎么样, 人身安全第一 *wulun zenyang anquan diyi* ("No matter what, personal safety comes first") is Xiaofei's mantra.

Hence we see that the reasons for shifting toward an English-dominant linguistic repertoire are many. Schools and workplaces hold a monolingual ethos, even though the student population and the workforce are culturally and linguistically diverse. The education system typically does not reward or recognize CHL learning outside the school curriculum (for example, AP Chinese does not strengthen the profile of CHL college applicants). Racial discrimination against Chinese and other Asian-Americans, against Chinese-accented English, and against Chinese culture-specific communicative styles all lead to hopes for their children to erase traces of the Chinese language in order to compensate for looking "different" and to prove American-ness.

For the second generation, the motivation for learning Chinese evolves across the life span. At a young age, learning is more a result of pressure from parents and an obligation to be a good child. As they mature and gain personal control over their studies and lives, those who continue to learn and use Chinese do so because they have found personal meaning and significance through the CHL learning process. In a survey study of motivation of 145 learners of CHL, Comanaru and Noels (2009) report that CHL learners strongly associate Chinese language learning with their self-concept and their sense of

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connection with the Chinese community. This finding is supported by two subsequent case studies on Korean as a heritage language (Kim, 2017) and Spanish as a heritage language (Coryell et al., 2010). Kim (2017) investigates the motivation of seven immigrant adolescents to learn Korean and finds that the commonality between the participants is that their motivation is tied to the negotiated identities within their immediate as well as imagined speech communities. Coryell et al. (2010) examine seven heritage learners of Spanish and identify a cultural fantasy metanarrative which enables the participants to imagine themselves to assume idealized identities in their borderland communities.

Hence the individual, family, school, and broader societal factors are all intricately and interdependently involved in the shifting of linguistic repertoire in communication and socialization within a community. The process of the shift from one repertoire to another in the context of immigration is often not abrupt; nor is it recti- or unilinear, just as second-language acquisition is not linear (Hiver et al., 2021). The characteristics of complex systems such as emergence, interconnected levels and timescales, nonlinearity, dynamism, and context dependence that hold resonance for language planning and language policy (Larsen-Freeman, 2018) can be applied to language shift too. The multiple aspects of the HL speakers' identities (Leeman, 2015) and the multiple aspects of the HL families' and HL communities' evolving communicative traits, though sometimes contradictory, may eventually grow to coexist. Like the *yin* and *yang* forces, they will grow to become mutual sources of sustenance, each becoming a medium through which the whole HL speaker and the entire HL community may be expressed. The process of language shift across space and time is thus both shaped by and shapes the continuing interaction between the various dimensions of individual, familial, and societal communicative needs.

8.1.3 Future Trajectories

What will happen next? In what direction will the CHL socialization continue? What will be the ultimate outcome? As an ethnographic understanding of CHL is necessarily dynamic and ergodic, while the overall course of change might be projected, the actual outcomes of change are unpredictable, even though explicable after the fact. Rather than speculating *the* outcome, it might be more productive to describe the diverse possible outcomes of this process of socialization, attrition, and/or resocialization, and to develop a typology of vulnerability and resources affecting each outcome.

As outlined in Chapter 1, the condition of CHL as reflected in the stories, voices, and practices in this book is largely conceptualized within the rhizome model proposed by French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari,

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who use the term *rhizome* to describe theory and research that allows for multiple, nonhierarchical entry and exit points in data representation and interpretation. They set up a contrast between a rhizomatic model and an arborescent/root–tree model. A rhizome works with horizontal connections, while an arborescent model works with vertical and linear connections. As a model for culture, the rhizome does not look for the original source of "things" and does not look for the conclusion of those "things." The rhizome is like a map. It has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things. It resists chronology and organization. Along this line of thinking, CHL grows not necessarily vertically, but horizontally, seizing whatever opportunities are there for its growth, but not necessarily toward any particular endpoint. It will continue to grow like bamboo, flexible, bending with the wind but never breaking, capable of adapting to any circumstance.

The rhizome model shares some commonality with the chaos perspective in second-language acquisition in that what has been obtained in HL is not a steady state, but always provisional. As the HL changes its forms, purposes, and functions, it would be impossible to identify, let alone measure, all of the contributing factors accurately – English, other HLs, technology, social-interactional opportunities and patterns, language ideologies, statuses, policies. And even though we may be able to make some predictions about a group as a whole, it would be impossible to predict the outcome of the combination and interaction between the contributing factors in any one individual HL speaker. Or, put in an evolutionary perspective, where the linguistic ecosystem can be characterized by chance (random variation) and necessity (natural selection), whether the HL will survive depends on whether it is adapted to prevailing conditions of life, whatever those conditions might be.

From a linear, developmental perspective (Tse, 1998), immigrant children go through different stages of ethnic identity formation, beginning from unawareness, to ambivalence or evasion, emergence, and eventual incorporation. Each of these stages has implications for HL learning. This perspective appears compatible with the overall behavioral patterns of the participants at different life stages included in this study, but it leaves two issues to be addressed. First, these stages may be associated with internal aspirations (or lack thereof) to learn/maintain the HL but do not consider external affordances such as family language policies, access to HL in the community, recognition of HL in the schools, and societal ideology concerning the HL and its associated race and ethnicity, all of which, as we have documented throughout the book, are critical in shaping the trajectory of HL development. Second, ethnic identity is not a static, unchanging quality throughout the life span, but rather an evolving social construct of projection by the self and perception by others. In other words, what is being rejected at an early stage may not be the same as what is being embraced at a later stage.

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Alternatively, we may take a perspective that is independent of life stages. That is to say, we may focus on temporal, spatial, and identity coherence and continuity, between the past and future, local and global, private and public, individual and societal, inheritance and creativity (He, 2006). In this view, learning and maintaining HL have the best chance when immigrant children see their heritage language as a resource to enrich their lives, have access to opportunities for constant engagement with persons and materials in the HL, and have the desire and capacity to bring vitality to the HL by using it for change and transformation. As we saw in Chapter 7, young adults gravitate toward Chinese when they find it useful to their life in various situations, whether it is for internship opportunities, consumption purposes, or social justice causes. In other words, when Chinese language serves to enable them to realize their goals, values, and dreams, which have been developed through their upbringing and education in the U.S., they are motivated to learn and to use Chinese. This also explains why children at a younger age tend to resist or reject Chinese in the absence of such motivations.

Specifically, we have reason to believe that CHL as enrichment stands a better chance of remaining as part of the linguistic repertoire than CHL as necessity. When families use CHL by necessity (i.e., parents speak CHL because their English is limited), then the children are likely to see CHL as limiting rather than enriching. By contrast, when parents are functionally bilingual and speak CHL because they choose to, their children see a model of the development or maintenance of the English–Chinese repertoire "where the motive is linguistic, cognitive, and cultural enrichment – the creation of citizens of the world" (Hakuta, 1986: 229–230). This perhaps also explains to some extent why there seems to be pride for classroom-attained CHL on the one hand and sometimes uneasiness about home-acquired CHL on the other. As we have seen, by and large, CHL young adults tend to be more enthusiastic about and committed to CHL learning than pre-college children as the former have found their own place, so to speak, in the English-speaking world, a place where they see themselves as linguistic and social equals to others and where they feel free to ground, enrich, and expand their experiences. In other words, the degree of success in maintaining a bilingual repertoire correlates positively with the extent to which the speaker has created a niche (linguistic, social, cultural) in mainstream society. By the same token, children who speak only CHL before school age will be more likely to develop a negative attitude toward CHL when they start school than those using two languages from infancy. The former group see CHL as holding them back and separating them from their peers and as the cause of not understanding English (and its various ramifications), whereas the latter, who are already comfortable with English, do not see the need to resist CHL in order to position themselves fittingly in the primarily English-speaking world.

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The enrichment of linguistic repertoire has direct identity implications. CHL speakers assume multiple identifications that may be overlapping and/or competing and even contradictory. The salience of specific identifications varies contextually and relationally (Rampton, 2006; Reyes and Lo, 2008). The degree of success in keeping CHL in the linguistic repertoire will correlate positively with the desire and ease with which speakers are able to leverage differences and discontinuities presented by multiple speech roles in multiple, intersecting communities for the expansion of identity options. Conversely, if and when CHL does not lead to enriched opportunities, status, and/or prestige in college admissions, job opportunities, or promotion prospects due to societal discriminatory language and racial ideologies, the learners and their families will fail to envisage benefits and rewards (social, economic, interactional, affective) and will be less motivated to keep CHL as part of their linguistic repertoire.

Enrichment is necessary but not sufficient; keeping CHL in the active linguistic repertoire requires constant engagement. CHL children must have desire for and access to moment-by-moment communication with diverse input and feedback. Existing research, though limited, has confirmed our suspicion that strong long-term motivations may not necessarily lead to success in CHL learning (Lu and Li, 2008; Tse, 2001). A very important aspect of motivation comes from the reward of communicating in situated activities, such as being able to follow the story in a Chinese-language movie, being able to write an email to the grandparents, being able to talk to relatives or to travel independently in Chinese-speaking worlds, being able to make online purchases and negotiations, being able to communicate with family about race and social justice.

Finally, as heritage language learners navigate their linguistic abilities within the spheres of family, peers, and educational establishments, they partake in a dual process of adapting to specific speech communities and acquiring literacy as a tool to express personal interpretations. This has the potential to reshape communities, ideologies, racial dynamics, and power structures. Put simply, heritage language learning can serve as a means to both uphold ancestral traditions and revolutionize the very customs that initially motivated the pursuit of heritage language proficiency.

All things considered, for the family, language shift is not a linear process from monolingual Chinese to Chinese–English bilingual to monolingual English, and is not a process that is completed within one or even two generations. A realistic outcome could be the development of language repertoires, with the end goal being to bring about access, equity, and inclusion for CHL speakers in a wide range of speech settings involving different participants and with different communicative objectives rather than preserving and strengthening the Chinese language per se. In other words, language shift does not have

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to lead to complete replacement of Chinese by English. It is more likely that individuals and communities will become bilingual or engage in language mixing and translanguaging, resulting in hybrid linguistic identities. In this scenario, CHL speakers will not become so-called "native-like" speakers of some form of Chinese, but speakers with rich multilingual repertoires, making free and frequent use of different parts of their entire linguistic repertoire, and contributing to ever-expanding repertoires of knowledge, epistemology, meaning, and experiences at the societal level (Gramling, 2021). Rather than shifting from one language to another and learning and living in one of the languages, they will use their entire linguistic and modal repertoire and leverage all of their meaning-making resources and all of their life experiences through translanguaging and trans-semiotizing practices that include languages, visuals, gestures, and bodily movement (Lin, 2019). Such a language and life outcome also has the potential to give a different cultural framing to CHL speakers other than deficient speakers of Chinese or dubious bilinguals in the U.S. As our stories unfold against the backdrop of a rapidly expanding Asian America, upwardly mobile urban and suburban professionals and their families are trying to forge a new fluid identity that is not the privileged White nor the underprivileged BIPOC (Black, indigenous and people of color), but something that transcends the country's racial binary and that embraces multiculturalism.

One example of a transcultural, translingual Chinese-American in a transnational, cosmopolitan space between the U.S. and China, with dual linguistic allegiance to the U.S. by choice and to China by inheritance, is found in Eileen Gu, the California-born athlete who won two gold medals for China in freestyle skiing at the 2022 Beijing Olympics and who has signed on to work for Salt Lake City's bid for the 2030 or 2034 Winter Olympics (Associated Press, 2022).

Eileen Gu is similar in age to Felix and Christine in our study. She was born in the United States to a Chinese mother, but competed for China in the 2022 Beijing Olympics and won two gold medals and one silver in Beijing. In explaining her decision, she said that her goal is to inspire young Chinese women. Eileen's mother, Yan, like the parents in our study, emigrated from China about thirty years ago, during the same period and sharing a similar profile as the parents in this book. Yan did graduate studies in biochemistry and molecular biology at research universities in the U.S., per *Forbes*. She has also worked in investment banking at companies in New York and California, and worked as a private investor and expert in China for U.S. investment companies. According to the *New York Times*, Eileen was raised in a neighborhood in San Francisco known for large houses and ocean views. Eileen is fluent in Mandarin Chinese and has visited relatives and friends in Beijing most summers of her life.

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In announcing her role with Salt Lake City, Eileen Gu said that skiing and her position with the bid committee was a "beautiful example of globalism." She is fully fluent in conversational Chinese and has been a target of patriotic and even nationalistic sentiment from both countries: sometimes adoring, sometimes hostile.

Eileen has publicly spoken about her choice to compete for China, writing on Instagram that it was an "incredibly tough decision" for her to make. "I am proud of my heritage, and equally proud of my American upbringings," she wrote.

> The opportunity to help inspire millions of young people where my mom was born, during the 2022 Beijing Olympic Winter Games is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to help to promote the sport I love. Through skiing, I hope to unite people, promote common understanding, create communication, and forge friendships between nations. If I can help to inspire one young girl to break a boundary, my wishes will have come true. U.S. CN ❤ (See www.womenshealthmag.com/life/a39003028/eileen-gu-parents-father-family.)

The case of Eileen Gu provides an excellent lens to study the phenomenon of split allegiance, and theoretical implications for our understanding of language–immigration relations. While language is often viewed as a proxy for cultural and identity formation and transformation, many other factors come into play when it comes to diaspora identities. These factors include geo-socio-techo-political ecosystems (social/linguistic injustice, discrimination, xenophobia, whether speech is racialized and speech communities are minoritized) and the specific experiences with inequitable linguistic diaspora.

We see that "diaspora" is or can be a social and linguistic construction. Felix's girlfriend Christine, for reasons of race and less privileged socioeconomic status than Eileen Gu, is domestic but perpetually cast as a displaced diasporic person. During times of crisis, she was considered unwelcome or unwanted, even though she is a third-generation immigrant. She maintains few linguistic ties with the place of her family's origin, and does not have the desire or resources (financial or cultural and linguistic) to return there. Nonetheless, she is still not seen as an American. Even her English, which is as "native" as it gets, draws attention in the form of racialization in the disguise of compliments. Eileen Gu, on the other hand, for reasons of privileged socioeconomic class, enjoys her family's diasporic status, with a good command of a wide range of linguistic and cultural resources as well as the fluid mobility to cross borders as she pleases. She draws on her rich immigrant linguistic repertoire to present and project different dimensions of her cultures and identities. From an intersectional perspective (Block and Corona, 2016), neither Christine's nor Eileen Gu's ways of knowing, reading, and interpreting the world of immigrant communities due to different diasporic experiences should be relegated to the

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peripheries of mainstream conversations about immigrant languages, communities, and humanity in general.

I share with the reader the stories told by CHL speakers' family members, the language traits of CHL speakers and their interlocutors, the trans-language practices and the transforming interactional routines, the agencies and voices, and the congruences and contrasts between narrated perspectives and lived experiences. I thereby show that in the complex process of heritage language socialization, CHL speakers' language and identity resources develop, stabilize, shrink, or expand as their social networks, attitudes, allegiances, and affinities evolve over time. In the long process of acquiring, challenging, rejecting, resisting, (re)learning, embracing, or transcending the heritage language from birth to early adulthood, CHL speakers' linguistic journeys are (re)shaped by shifting communicative practices and participation in everyday life, evolving possibilities in various sociocultural groups, and lifelong intergenerational, interlingual, intercultural adaptations.

8.2 Limits of the Narratives

8.2.1 The Tellers

Bucholtz and Hall (2010: 25) argue that "since identity is inherently relational, it will always be partial, produced through contextually situated and ideologically informed configurations of self and other." This book has focused on the relatively privileged, entrepreneurial, and professional transnational connections, i.e., a group of college graduates, among hundreds of thousands who arrive every year from China to the U.S. for graduate studies and then settle down there. The group of Chinese immigrant families included in this book and the children in these families share very similar profiles. The first generation resemble what Lindenfeld and Varro (2008) call "fortunate immigrants" in terms of their motivation for immigration, their socioeconomic status, and their patterns of contact with their country of origin. They came with college education and arrived in the U.S. with a fair command of English and an indomitable will not just to survive but to succeed. Upon completion of their graduate degrees, they have mostly joined the middle class or the upper middle class socioeconomically. While they have more or less completed the transition from China to the U.S. in terms of socioeconomic class, they have not been able to transcend language and race. On the surface, at least, language, accent, and race appear to be the last perceptible barrier for their further upward social mobility in the U.S. It is in this sense that it will be up to their children whether their parents' American socialization process will be continued and completed.

In a 2005 study on immigration and assimilation, David Card (2005) found that judging by the success of the U.S.-born children of immigrants, post-1965

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immigrants are doing reasonably well; overall, the second generation have attained higher levels of education and higher levels of income than children of natives. The children in our study are children of first-generation immigrants but also children of the American suburbs. They seem to be, in general, and as measured by test scores in schools, "doing well." As noted by Hultgren (2020) and Blommaert (2017), good school attainment cannot be attributed exclusively to using specific languages at home or in school; the critical role of parents' income and educational background should not be overlooked. The second generation speak so-called "standard" middle-class American English, which does not reveal much of minority racial traits. Like their parents, many of them are independent, ambitious, and assertive. Unlike their parents, they have friends of different skin colors and date whomever they please. Many of the older children have non-Chinese partners in life. For many, the COVID-19 pandemic was the first time they seriously reckoned with racial discrimination and social injustice. Young people like Diane, Emily, and Felix and Christine are trying both to extinguish traces of Chinese in their speech in English and to distinguish themselves by asserting their Chinese cultural roots, wearing Hanfu and Chinese-script tattoos but without necessarily making great efforts to enhance or retain Chinese language proficiency within their linguistic repertoire.

As Norton (2000) reminded us, learners' desire to learn and use a particular language changes over space and time and is tied to specific, and generally inequitable, relations of power. The diaries of five female learners of English analyzed by Norton indicated that the learners' desires to use English outside the classroom and their opportunities to interact with other speakers of English were influenced by their situated identities – both how they positioned themselves and how they were positioned by others in specific communicative events. The identities are dynamic, evolving, interactional, and open to negotiation. This point is echoed by Zhu and Li (2016), who pointed out the experiences of different generations and individuals in dealing with bilingualism and multilingualism and how their experiences affect the way individual family members perceive social relations and social structures and construct and present their own identities. In this light, the stories shared by CHL families provide important insights into how they perceive and project their various identities and how these identities bear on their motivations to keep, enhance, or diminish CHL as part of their linguistic repertoires.

As language intersects with ideology and economy, for the families included in this book, an HL may be an added benefit, providing a broader linguistic repertoire, with greater cultural capital. However, when heritage speakers and their languages are understood as connected to minoritized and/or marginalized communities and to the experience of inequitable multilingualism (Ortega, 2020), we will see that, for the less fortunate, CHL can be an added liability.

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If we were to focus on the less fortunate, the struggling, the disenfranchised, who were smuggled and brought from China to the U.S. by boat, their stories would have been vastly different, even though they too arrived in the U.S. during the Third Wave of Chinese immigration (Liu and Cherng, 2022). In the case of those with limited English language skills, fewer material resources, challenging neighborhoods, and unfavorable workplaces, for their children to keep CHL as part of their linguistic repertoire is often a necessity, and not a choice (Yoshikawa, 2011). Furthermore, in this case, CHL may be taken as a proxy for their perceived vulnerabilities and precarious circumstances associated with the lack of legal status in the U.S.

8.2.2 The Tales

A word of caution is necessary about the stories presented in this book as well. These stories and the perspectives therein are shaped by specific individual experiences, public discourses, and societal ideologies in particular times and spaces. As Bakhtin (1986) argued, narratives are fundamentally dialogic: they are always addressed to someone and presented by the voices of others. Like the authors of autobiographies that Pavlenko (2002) studied, who drew on particular language ideologies from the late 1880s to World War I to make sense of and craft their own language-learning experiences and achievements, the parents, grandparents, teachers, and children in this book tell their stories in ways that reflect a widely accepted ethos about tradition, education, immigration, and assimilation, in the period from the 1960s to the 2020s when China underwent drastic changes in its social structure, political ideology, and cultural norms; when the U.S. changed from prohibiting to accepting immigration from China and other Asian countries; when demographics in the U.S. have changed drastically and tensions between races are not only deeply entrenched but also increasing; when Chinese and other Asian-Americans constitute a part of, but are perceived as apart from, mainstream American society and culture; and when U.S.–China relations go through alternating periods of collaboration and competition. The stories about these Chinese immigrant families' language choice, language use, language trajectory, and language policy are invariably responsive to and conditioned by these concurrent, larger socio-cultural-geopolitical narratives.

There are, of course, also experiences deeply felt but not fully shared. The relationship between family language use and mental health is one of them. Anxiety and depression are on the rise for many high-school students of Chinese cultural background, especially when the college application season is approaching. The pressure to gain admission to a prestigious college can be intense, given the heavy emphasis on success and excellence in academics. Not getting into highly ranked colleges can be considered

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a failure by parents and by Chinese communities. Both Diana and Felix's girlfriend Christine alluded to the fact that they had a difficult time in high school due to pressure from home to excel in academics, but they did not provide any elaborations beyond saying that they felt some level of depression and anxiety, worsened by their packed schedules and heavy workloads. By and large, the topic of mental health is commonly avoided within Chinese-American communities and even considered "taboo." According to Spencer et al. (2010), Asian-Americans have a 17.30 percent overall lifetime rate of any psychiatric disorder. Only 8.6 percent of Asian-Americans sought any type of mental help services, compared to 18 percent of the general American population. Complicating the issue is the intergenerational language barrier. While parents like the ones included in this book have a functional command of English, they may not have reached the level of proficiency where they can communicate delicate and complex senses and sensibilities in English; likewise, children's command of Chinese is largely limited to everyday routines, which does not give them the capacity to communicate sophisticated arguments or nuanced experiences.

The goal of using a serial narrative-ethnographic approach is to draw large conclusions from small but chronologically and/or logically related and densely textured events experienced by different participants in different developmental stages and to support broad assertions about the role of context and culture in the development of heritage language by situating language and life in complex, concrete specifics. As is the case with any other analytic perspective, however, an SNE approach to research on HL learning certainly faces its own challenges. Are the narratives collected valid? Is the process of narrativization valid? Are the narratives and narrativized accounts valid representations of the participants' lives and languages? Are they the co-constructions jointly produced by the researcher and the participant? Are they exact or modified recounts about past events and happenings, or considered or off-the-cuff projections of the future? To make claims supported by the narrative textual evidence, the researcher needs to understand and make clear the nature of the collected and (re)constructed narratives, addressing challenges with regard to the degree of participants' disclosure and the limits imposed by language itself and by the level of participants' language proficiency, the influence of the researcher on participants' responses, and the gap between small stories and large issues. The challenge here is to ensure the credibility of the connection we make between small stories of mundane interaction in everyday life and big stories of language development and language change and to ensure the credibility of the link between a collection of remarks and anecdotes with linguistic and cultural journeys of individuals, families, and communities.

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8.3 Heritage Languages for Social Justice

In a talk titled "Rethinking language policy," the late Bernard Spolsky (2021) pointed out that beyond the dichotomy of maintenance and attrition is "management" – specifically, managing language status (giving speakers a reason to choose the language), managing language corpus (modifying the lexicon, grammar, or writing system), and managing language education (adding speakers). He further asked the following questions: language success for whom? Is it success for speakers, groups, society, or the state? Language failure in what sense? Is it in the sense of no change, loss of varieties, loss of speakers, social gap, undesired hybridization, or loss of group identity? These questions are helpful for us as we piece together various interlocking aspects of language practices, language ideologies, and language management.

While "transnationalism" often suggests mobility, modernity, and simultaneous and convenient access to multiple linguistic and cultural resources, "immigration" seems to imply a more negative connotation of displacement and disadvantage. In this book, I have presented a constructivist perspective whereby a linguistic diaspora is viewed as multilingual and intercultural communicative practices across generations and geographies. In this view, diasporas are dynamic and evolving instead of static or stable; diaspora and domesticity form not a dichotomy but a continuum; heritage languages (and language use in diaspora) accentuate the contingency, hybridity, and indeterminacy against essentialist conceptualizations of identities, communities, race, nation, and culture.

We have considered the discursive construction of people (we, you, and they), places (the land of birth, the land of life, and the places in between), languages (for use both inside and outside home), and lives (lived and anticipated, material and moral). Drawing narrative-ethnographic data from Chinese-American communities for illustrative purposes, I have focused not so much on displacement and disadvantage as given, deterritorialized extension of an ethnolinguistic group, but on congruences and conflicts that are open to continuous reinterpretation, reconstruction and transformation through productive and creative use of the speakers' entire linguistic and cultural repertoires. I have argued that it is this intersection of connection and transformation that leads to the reproduction of heritage languages, cultures, and identities.

As mentioned previously, the use and significance of heritage languages need to be examined in the context of their rich "diaspora space" (Brah, 1996), where belonging ties and identities brought from home are crafted as well as challenged. While this book was being conceptualized and written, groundbreaking developments have been quickly changing the field of Chinese diaspora studies. The ascendancy of China on the global stage has engendered a multifaceted impact. This transformation has instigated several noteworthy

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phenomena, including a substantial influx of Chinese elite students pursuing education abroad, a notable migration of affluent individuals from China to Western nations, and the repatriation of Chinese expatriates. This confluence of events under geopolitical and socioeconomic conditions different from the late 1980s and early 1990s (when the first-generation Chinese immigrants included in this study arrived in the U.S.) has given rise to a new and nuanced discourse concerning the construct of "Chinese-ness." As a consequence, it has prompted a re-evaluation of the intricate interplay between one's ancestral homeland and the host countries, while also redefining the imagery and significance associated with Chinese identity, particularly within the context of the diasporic Chinese community.

Heritage languages and heritage linguistic repertoires highlight contingency, hybridity, and indeterminacy against essentialist conceptualizations of nation, race, and culture. Maintaining these repertoires and keeping heritage languages strong serve to help minoritized and racialized communities maintain their sense of identity and dignity; to prevent the erasure of diverse languages and cultures; and to ensure that everyone is recognized, respected, and equitably represented in a multicultural, democratic society. Recognizing and supporting heritage languages in schools, workplaces, and public discourses foster a more inclusive society and combat stereotypes, biases, and discrimination. The future of immigrant languages is fundamentally intertwined with the realization of a more open and just society. In the ongoing progress of contemporary societies toward greater inclusivity and diversity, the maintenance of multilingual repertoires that are supportive of immigrant languages assumes a pivotal role in fostering a social milieu that accommodates and celebrates pluralism and equity.

Our discussion of language shift should thus be grounded in a critical consideration of social justice. It is time to examine the central role heritage language and heritage language learning play in shaping ideas about race, ethnicity, nationality, and citizenship (Mu, 2016) against the backdrop of Chinese and other Asian-Americans being positioned as both "model minorities" and "forever foreigners" and being perpetually marginalized as a part of but apart from U.S. society. As Trofimovich and Turuševa (2015) point out, we need to understand how ethnic identity is implicated in language learning, and particularly in heritage language learning (Tse, 1998). What steps do we need to take to enhance all (both diasporic and domestic) speakers' multilingualism? How can a multilingual approach to communication and education improve everyone's language awareness, language skills, and intercultural communicative competence? How can multilingualism empower heritage language speakers' identities and increase their confidence and motivation to learn or maintain heritage languages as part of their linguistic repertoire? We need to start with classrooms and communities, to center multiculturalism and

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multilingualism as the norm, and to combat racism and xenophobia, so that no one will be made to feel burdened or ashamed by their languages, accents, or conversational styles and everyone will have the dignity to keep their language and cultural repertoires rich and enriched.

As we close the final chapter of this intricate, interwoven serial narrative, we leave behind a polyphony of voices, a tapestry of experiences, and an array of unresolved inquiries. Our exploration of the complexities and sometimes contradictions in maintaining Chinese as a heritage language has illuminated the challenges, dedication, frustration, resilience, and richness from the intersection of myriad perspectives and paths. The process of language shift in the context of immigration reflects the deeply interconnected and ever-evolving nature of language, culture, and identity. As we move forward, let us keep in mind that our heritage languages are not static relics. They are living narratives that evolve in response to tradition, adaptation, and the interplay between the past and the future.

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