Preface

It is widely believed that the first-generation immigrants speak, the second generation understand, and the third generation lose the language of the land of their family origin. Is this true? If yes, exactly why and how does language shift happen? How do the first-generation immigrants' own language experiences and socioeconomic aspirations in the U.S. impact the language practices in the household? What is the role of the values and traditions from the culture of origin in shaping the language choice of the second generation? How does the family interactional dynamic impact the attitudes that the second generation hold toward the immigrant language? To what extent is the presence of grandparents in the same household helpful to maintaining the immigrant language? How effective are community-based ethnic language schools in preventing the attrition of immigrant languages? How do the language and communication ethos in schools and at workplaces impact immigrants' family language policies? Is the loss of immigrant languages a necessary price to pay for academic success and professional achievement in American society? Does the modern convenience of communication and travel between the U.S. and the country of origin make any difference to immigrant language maintenance? In what specific ways do the barriers and challenges brought about by racial and linguistic discrimination impact the management of immigrant languages? What are the nature, the scope, and the trajectory of language shift? Is it a linear shift from language A to language B across two or three generations? Or does language shift involve the entire linguistic repertoire of the immigrant-language-speakers? And to what extent is language shift responsive to the shifts in the speakers' values and allegiances that evolve, perhaps unpredictably, across the life span?

This book addresses these questions through a serial narrative ethnography of a group of second-generation Chinese immigrants and their families in the U.S. The research reported in this book is "serial" in the sense that observational, interview, and audio-/video-recorded data were collected from a collage of different speakers of Chinese as an immigrant language in settings and situations across different stages of life from early childhood to early adulthood. The research is also "narrative" in the sense that it presents ample

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narratives told by various participants, narratives which were subsequently re-storied and synthesized to form a grand tale of language and life in the context of immigration. Through the voices of young speakers of Chinese in the U.S., their family members, their teachers, their translingual practices, and their transforming interactional routines, as well as their congruencies and contrasts between narrated perspectives and lived experiences, this book aims to show that language, culture, and identity are intricately interwoven, that there are many perspectives from which the process of language shift may be constructed, that language shift has several possible trajectories, and that the final outcome of the shift is being shaped by the actions and interactions of the relevant speakers today. This book is written for students and scholars in the sociolinguistics of language contact, applied linguistics, discourse linguistics, linguistic anthropology, educational linguistics, diasporic languages, and heritage-language socialization, as well as anyone who is interested in the relationships between language, culture, and identity; between linguistic rootedness and global citizenry; and between family heritage and individual aspiration.

This is the book I have been writing in my heart for many years. It stems from my curiosity about the relationship between language, culture, and personhood that began at a very young age. I was born and raised in China. While my parents spoke to me in Mandarin and the Shanghai dialect, their working language was Spanish. My early memories included hearing my parents switch between Chinese and Spanish in conversations with each other, feeling how remote and removed they would suddenly seem upon the utterance of a Spanish trill that I would try to mimic and master. When I was about ten years old, my father began teaching me English. To this day, I still remember how I relished the phonemic contrast between [s] "s" and [θ] "th" while practicing the line "Good morning, Mr. Smith!" (from *English 900*) and how exhilarated I felt when I generated the very first English sentence of my own – "I can see the trees through the window." What was even more enchanting than the newly acquired sound repertoire and the grammatical system was the fact that the more proficient I became in English, the more I felt enriched and empowered by the freedom to move between and beyond two linguistic worlds.

My undergraduate studies as an English major in China not only sensitized me to the rhythms of the English language but also made me realize that every language embodies a cultural universe, which is often tacit and taken for granted by expert language users but which can denote incommensurable sensibilities and unimaginable experiences to a novice language learner. It took me many years to understand that a language as a system (consisting of sounds, words, sentence patterns) cannot be separated from a language as a way of being; to learn and to use an additional language is to be socialized into additional ways of speaking, additional identities, affinities, dispositions, and communities. My brief stay in Singapore and graduate studies in the

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U.S. taught me that language choice and language use are intricately intertwined with contextual and co-textual contingencies; that everyday interaction constitutes the primary locus for the construction of culture; and, most importantly for this book, that language is a resource for being, for doing, and for growth and change.

The arrival of my children prompted me to revisit, on a personal level, the issues concerning language and culture that had intrigued me all my life. Will Chinese spoken at home be a help or hindrance to my children's development? Will the children be able to reach a level of proficiency in Chinese comparable to what was achieved by their grandparents in Spanish? Will they experience the kind of delight and disconnect with Chinese that I experienced when I was learning English in China? Will they be able to make sense and use of the contradictions as well as the congruences between Chinese and American cultures as they live across languages?

Motivated by these questions and equipped with the expertise I had developed as an applied linguist and a discourse analyst, I began, over two decades ago, to research the development of Chinese as a heritage language (hereafter CHL) by examining a wide range of communicative features associated with CHL in both classroom and home settings, including speech roles and speech exchange systems, discourse markers, modal verbs and pronominal references, sequential and social bases of semantic ambiguity, and language choice and language mixing, all in the context of CHL learner identity (trans)formation. Over the years, my work has been supported by the Spencer Foundation, the National Academy of Education (NAE)/Spencer Postdoctoral Fellowship Program, and, most crucially, the John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship, which afforded me the opportunity to think and write about heritage language at a new level.

This book is, then, a natural culmination of my writing and thinking in the past two decades. In some measure, I have been drafting and editing its various chapters in my head, many times. But putting the passion into print has enabled me to bring my thinking to greater clarity and greater depth and to share my observations, documentations, analyses, conclusions, and reflections in ways that matter to the heart and mind of all who have an interest in language and socialization in the context of immigration and globalization across the life span.

Over the past two decades, my colleagues in the Department of Asian and Asian American Studies at Stony Brook University have provided a collegial academic home for me. My colleagues across departments and disciplines who share an interest in languages, cultures, and communication have supported and sustained my intellectual passion. My former dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Nancy Squires, placed great faith in me by giving me the opportunity to build and lead the interdisciplinary Center for Multilingual and Intercultural Communication (MIC), now a vibrant intellectual hub both on campus and beyond. My students in my Intercultural Communication class over the years

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have engaged me, challenged me, and constantly reminded me that language is not just what we speak but who we are. To all the above, I am deeply grateful.

During the long process of writing this book, I have benefited from the warmth and wisdom of many. To the late Peter Fries, Marianne Celce-Murcia, Richard Young, Bambi Schieffelin, the late Tim McNamara, Joan Kelly Hall, Hongyin Tao, Masha Polinsky, Olga Kagan (in memoriam), Mark Aronoff, S. N. and Meena Sridhar, Dorit Kaufman, Eriko Sato, Jiwon Hwang, E. K. Tan, Terry Wiley, Suresh Canagarajah, Liz Lanza, Jun Liu, Georges Fouron, Angela Scarino, Scott McGinnis, Wenhao Diao, and Yang Xiao-Desai, thank you for your support, validation, and recommendation of references. To Patsy Duff, Duanduan Li, Zhu Hua, Li Wei, Xiao Lan Curdt-Christiansen, and Yun Xiao, thank you for your kindred spirits and your seminal contributions to the field of Chinese as a heritage language, with which my own work intersects and on which my own work is built.

I am particularly indebted to Elinor Ochs, my teacher at UCLA. From her, I learned that intellectual matters cannot and should not be separated from those of the heart. Follow your heart, find your own voice, and pursue your goal with courage, devotion, and discipline. In this regard, her own example is unsurpassed. She makes seemingly dull academic matters human and beautiful. A consummate agent of socialization, she inspired me to study the sense and soul of language.

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I am deeply grateful to my parents, who have shown me the linguistic possibility and cultural profitability of geographical border crossing at different life stages and under different circumstances, through their own remarkable examples.

I am richly blessed with my husband Duanfeng (Jackson) He, who supports and inspires me through his love and passion for life.

To the anonymous parents, teachers, children, and young adults whose stories are recorded, reconstructed, and re-presented in this book, words are not adequate to express my gratitude for your generosity and for

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enthusiastically sharing with me your rich memories and candid reflections, in which I find both parallels to my own personal life and inspirations for further professional exploration. This book is about you and cannot be written without you.

One day, years ago, just before he turned seven, my son Luran decided not to do his daily Chinese reading and even proclaimed that he did not want to speak Chinese at home. I was stunned and saddened. After a long silence, I heard myself say to Luran in an uncharacteristically calm voice, "It is your choice if you decide not to learn Chinese anymore and not to speak Chinese anymore. But you see, you are my child. And I feel and think and speak and write in both Chinese and English. If you don't speak and read in Chinese, you won't be able to get all the love that I have for you." It was silence again, which must have lasted only a few seconds, but which felt like eternity. Then Luran broke down in tears, first sobbing, and then wailing. I held him tight and cried too. The power of language had never been felt so deeply before.

This book is dedicated to my children Luran and Yiran. 路然、逸然, 我心爱的孩子们, 希望中文同样能够赋予你们温暖、智慧、自由和力量; 希望通过中文你们能够从另一个视角体会 the magnificence of humanity.

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