Mandarin Sunday Classes: Educators' and Parents' Perceptions on Literacy Development of Second Generation Chinese-American Children^{*}

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Children acquire literacy from several sources: school, community, family's funds of knowledge, etc.. Most second generation Chinese-American children are sent to the weekend classes to learn Mandarin, their heritage language (HL), a language that they are culturally or proficiently connected to. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore Chinese heritage language (CHL) school educators' and parents' perceptions of the Chinese literacy development of second generation Chinese-American children via Sunday classes in South Texas. The study used multiple data collection strategies including a non-participative observation of Sunday classes, and the interviews with the teachers, the principal, and parents. Responsibility, commitment, enthusiasm, participation, and cultural inheritance were some of the finding key terms that summarized participants' perceptions. Implications for a better venue of the Mandarin maintenance include, but not limited to, the merging to a formal bilingual private school.

Keywords: heritage language (HL), Chinese language maintenance, Mandarin Sunday classes, Chinese-American

Introduction

The waves of immigration from all over the world toward the United States (U.S.) have an effect on the growing number of K-12 students in public schools, not only because children are coming from foreign countries, but also because of the increasing number of second generation offspring born in America (García 2005; Passel, 2011; Tienda & Haskins, 2011). Despite this growing number, immigrants still are counted among the minority ethnic/linguistic/cultural groups in the U.S.. However, most of the time, minority groups feel compelled to establish heritage language (HL) schools as parallel educational institutions existing outside the U.S. educational system due to political factors, limited financial resources for public schools, and

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parent/community commitment (Chao, 1996). HL is to be broadly understood as the language that is not spoken by the dominant culture but rather in the minority families (Krashen, Tse, & McQuillan, 1998). The majority of HL schools have taught Chinese, French, Hebrew, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Polish, Portuguese, Spanish, Ukrainian, and Yiddish in the community for the benefit of families (Kelleher, 2010).

Indeed, two facts have characterized the panorama of the Chinese heritage language (CHL) education in the U.S.: (a) the growing number of HL learners, generally second generation children in processes of settlement or assimilation (Smith, 2002); and (b) the use of adequate teaching strategies addressing their needs (McGinnis, 2008). HL learners are “individuals with familial or ancestral ties to a language other than English” (Hornberger & Wang, 2008, p. 6).

According to the National Council of Associations of Chinese Language Schools (NCACLS) (NCACLS, n.d), current student enrollment in NCACLS-affiliated Chinese community schools is estimated to be around 100,000 as of 2005. NCACLS schools have primarily been connected to the Taiwan immigrants and heritage communities in the U.S.. The Chinese School Association in the U.S. (CSAUS), which has primary connections with mainland Chinese immigrants and heritage communities, reported student enrollment of approximately 60,000 as of early 2005 (see Website <http://www.ncsaus.org>). The limited amount of teaching strategies to address learners’ needs has to do with instructors’ preparation and sense of professional identity (Hsu-Pai, Palmer, & Field, 2011).

Problem Statement

Some Mandarin-speaking parents have chosen to use their HL voluntarily and emphasized the importance of the Chinese language to their children pointing to the academic benefits (betterment of the scholastic literacy) (Stavans, 2012). Additionally, the growing number of CHL schools and learners not only raised concerns about CHL teachers’ professional identity, commitment, and teaching beliefs, but also needs the best teaching practices at all costs (Hsu-Pai et al., 2011; McGinnis, 2008; Smith, 2002).

On the other hand, some of the previous studies (Chiang, 2000; Lam, 2005) have focused on students’ experiences, parental influence on children’s language ideology or maintenance of their ethno-linguistic identity (Curdts-Christiansen, 2003; Park, 2007; Phinney, Romero, Nava, & Huang, 2001; Rumbaut, 2005), and the teacher’s sense of professional identity (Hsu-Pai et al., 2011). Nevertheless, little research has shown using multiple data collection strategies explore school educators’ and parents’ perceptions on the Chinese literacy development of second generation Chinese-American children.

Purpose and Research Questions

This qualitative research aimed at exploring school educators (school principal and teachers) and parents’ perceptions on Chinese literacy development of second generation of Chinese-American children via Sunday classes in a CHL weekend school in South Texas. At this stage, literacy was broadly defined as the writing, reading, and speaking proficiency, but also a full range of practices involving the aforementioned types of proficiency (Barton, Hamilton, & Ivanic, 2000). In order to address the purpose of the study, the following research questions were explored:

1. What are school educators’ and parents’ perceptions on the Chinese literacy development of second generation Chinese-American children attending Sunday classes in South Texas?
2. How do school educators and parents express their views on the Chinese literacy development of second generation of Chinese-American children attending Sunday classes in South Texas?

Theoretical Framework

In the U.S., HL learners are students raised in a home where a non-English language is spoken, who merely speak or understand the home language, and at some extent are bilinguals (Valdés, 2001, p. 38). Literacy and culture being two intrinsic aspects of HL education in the U.S., the scope of many HL programs consists of allowing people to be involved in the process of self-shaping their futures in society (Wiley, 2001). As a result, the theoretical framework followed in this study is ethno-linguistic education, an approach which emphasizes ethnic identity development (Noels & Clément, 1998; Park, 2007) and the development of proficiency in the target language, the HL (Ding, 2013).

In fact, the feeling of pride or of belonging to an ethnic group pushes people to identify themselves as members of such groups. The language (learning) is seen as an important component of ethnic identity, because it facilitates social interactions and represents the people who use the target language to communicate and to negotiate (Noels & Clément, 1998; Phinney & Alipuria, 1996). Ethno-linguistic affiliation or identity, an important feeling for the language revitalization effort (Ding, 2013), walks hands on hands with the second language (L2) learning process (Ding, 2013; Park, 2007) or HL learning since this latter helps learners associate with their heritage culture regardless of the use or not of the HL at home (Fishman, 2001). Under the understanding of the existing relationship between ethno-linguistic education and HL learning, this study will explore school educators' (principal and teachers) and parents' perceptions of Chinese literacy development via weekend classes in a CHL weekend school in South Texas.

Significance of the Study

Findings may be informative for HL practitioners and developers of bilingual English-Chinese curricula as they may find insightful practical evidence or stories to base their activities on. In addition, as for scholars involved in the L2 learning practices, results can serve as suggestions on effective development of literacy proficiency in L2 or HL under subtractive bilingual settings. Finally, parents of CHL learners and other HL programs may find useful information able to influence their decision and determination of sending their second generation children to HL schools.

Division of the Article

To help readers better understand, the content of this study will be introduced with the following sections: a brief review of the literature on CHL programs in the U.S., research methodology, findings and analysis, and the conclusions as well recommendations.

Literature Review

This review of literature will cover bilingualism, HL in general, but most specifically, the development of CHL schools in the U.S.. Considered a relatively new discipline of bilingual education in general, HL refers to the language that is not spoken as a dominant language but used in minority families (Krashen et al., 1998). CHL in this study refers to Mandarin language as spoken in the U.S. by minority Chinese families.

Logically, noting that bilingualism and biliteracy involve instances, in which communication—written and spoken or articulated—happens in two languages (Hornberger, 1990). This communication is built upon interlocutors' interpretation and interaction (Heath, 1982). Because the interlocutors are present in a multitude of settings, literacy or biliteracy cannot exclusively be a school matter. Rather, it is also acquired from the community and the family's funds of knowledge (Moll, 1992). Therefore, literacy skills include learning to

read, to write, and to speak, and the dynamic of social practices involved in the acquisition of those skills (Barton et al., 2000). Hull and Schultz (2002) stated that “becoming literate involves more than simple mastering these discrete skills... [it] extends beyond isolated skills and includes one’s views and attitudes toward the world” (as cited in Dail & Payne, 2010, p. 330). Thus, these skills cannot be reserved only to formal or institutional settings.

At a certain point of the history of bilingual education in the U.S., bilingual children from minority ethnic groups were called heritage language learners (HLLs) or heritage culture learners (HCLs) (García, 2005). The term “HL” was first used in Canada in the 1970s, but it gained ground in the U.S. in the 1990s (Hornberger & Wang, 2008). The term has been used to talk about bilingual, native speaker children with a home language background or exposure, or who have learned a non-English language outside of their formal school education (Scalera, 2000; Webb & Miller, 2000).

Despite this learning is done outside of the formal or public education and despite the historical connection to endangered/indigenous, colonial, or immigrant languages (Fishman, 1999; Valdés, 2001), there must be a socio-psychological and cultural “struggle” dimension when defining or understanding HLLs (Hornberger & Wang, 2008). In the first perspective, where the ancestral affiliation is emphasized (Fishman, 2001), HLLs are linked to the ancestral language (Ding, 2013), but they live in a different geographical setting. Similarly, in the second perspective, where the level of proficiency in the HL is emphasized, HLLs are raised in non-English spoken families and merely speak or understand the HL (Valdés, 2001). Therefore, they are tacitly called to make choice between the “home” culture and the outside socio-cultural values. This internal struggling dimension is crucial in HLLs’ self-identity awareness.

In regards to the Chinese community in the U.S., the term “Chinese” is generally used to mean Mandarin language, the official language of China and Taiwan. Excluding any debate on the primacy of any language on others, both Mandarin speakers and speakers of other dialects of this latter accept the status of Mandarin as HL (Wiley, 2001). Consequently, the materials used in many community-based programs come from outside of the U.S..

Since 1848, during the emigration of Chinese laborers in the U.S., in order to address the needs of those immigrants, CHL schools have been considered as an integral part of the Chinese community in most cities. By 1905, several Chinese language schools were already consolidated in San Francisco, New York, and Chicago. By the late 1930s, many other schools were created in Los Angeles, San Diego, Washington D.C., New Orleans, Minneapolis, and Oakland. After the World War II, a new wave of “well-educated” immigrants, mainly from Taiwan and Hong Kong, introduced the concept of family-oriented education. They became their own children’s teachers (Wang, 1996).

Actually in the U.S., there are two categories of Chinese language schools. The for-profit category includes kindergartens, child-care centers, and tutorial schools for secondary students. The non-profit category comprises schools that are usually affiliated with non-profit organizations, such as churches. Non-profit schools operate on weekends or after normal school hours. The programs available in these schools are Mandarin Chinese only and Mandarin Chinese as a L2 classes (Wang, 1996).

However, the panorama of the CHL education sector in the U.S. faces two major issues: The growing number of HLLs and the use of adequate methods addressing their needs (McGinnis, 2008)—most of them being second generation children embedded in migration processes, settlement, and assimilation (Smith, 2002). These two issues are calling to think of CHL education not only as a heritage sector, but also as a benefit to the

mainstream American society since its preservation contributes to cultural diversity and enriches the American educational system (McGinnis, 2008; Wang, 1996).

Due to this rapid growth of CHL education, recent studies tried to analyze its impact on the American society. Chang (2010) looked at the effect of HL and public schools on the biliteracy development of Chinese-American children. Chang's (2010) qualitative case study on four Chinese-American students, third and fourth graders, intended to collect parents' and teachers' perceptions (through semi-structured interviews) on the students' biliteracy development in both the public and the HL schools. Findings showed that children's biliteracy development was shaped by languages, contexts, and cultural components. Curdt-Christiansen (2003) studied and analyzed the cultural knowledge as implicitly and explicitly included in the Chinese language art textbooks.

In fact, self-determination and motivation are some of the factors of learning a language. In a research study on 145 learners of Chinese, a correlation between learning (achievement) and learning process stated the following: "The more learners felt they were learning Chinese, because it was personally meaningful and fun, the more they engaged in the learning process" (Comanaru & Noels, 2009, p. 131). Of course, the CHL learning process was positively correlated to the home literacy environment. Chinese parents valued and fostered their children's HL maintenance even though the latter did not see the relevance of maintaining HL, and tended to use English or a mixture of English and HL to talk to their parents (Donghui & Slaughter-Defoe, 2009; Zhang & Koda, 2011).

In other research studies, Chinese immigrant families in Philadelphia used a co-ethnic network for the purpose of language maintenance: Mandarin second generation children, for example, resisted the pressures of linguistic assimilation while the Fujianese gave up their language as a way of surviving in the U.S. (Donghui, 2010; 2012).

When researchers came to investigate CHL teachers' perceptions, they discovered a weak sense of professional identity. Teachers' lack of professional identity was because they regarded the position as a secondary and volunteer job (Hsu-Pai et al., 2011). CHL language teachers' lack of identification was severely blamed by parents who wanted a different focus on curriculum, teaching style, teacher-parent communication, assessments, and class size—since Chinese classes consisted of both heritage and non-heritage learners (Lawton & Logio, 2009).

In definitive, the literature review suggests that in a bilingualism context, literacy includes also social interactions and practices involved in the learning of target language competences, such as reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Numerous studies on non-English speakers or HL learning children in the U.S. underlined the undergoing identity, language use, and socio-cultural struggles, while attending both the public education and HL learning schools. Other research studies reflected major issues faced by the rising of the CHL education in the U.S.: The growing number of HLLs and the appropriate methods to address their needs. From this perspective of HLL, another group of scholars sought a deep diagnostic of problems affecting CHL learning. Findings covered the shaping of biliteracy development through languages, contexts and culture, and the importance of self-determination and motivation in the acquisition of a HL, CHL teachers' lack of identification, and some children's resistance to CHL.

Methods

Research Design

In order to explore educators and parents' perceptions of Chinese literacy development or maintenance of second generation of Chinese-American children via Sunday classes, this research study required a qualitative

design embedded in multiple data collection strategies. This is, researchers, bounded by time and activity, had to collect detailed information from diverse procedures (Creswell, 2009; Stake, 1995) since conducting a qualitative research means involving “many things at the same time” (Nelson, Treichler, & Grossberg, 1992, p. 4).

The aforementioned design is a part of the broad area of the naturalistic inquiry. It uses and requires a human instrument and a natural setting to be carried out; it uses some of the appropriate methods to investigate about human being (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 187) in order to gain in-depth knowledge of everyday (therefore weekly) life and reality (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Site Selection

The site of this study was a CHL school managed by the Second Baptist Church in South Texas. The school is the only Chinese school in an urban zone. The site selection was made following accessibility criteria which would guarantee the viability of the study. In other words, the site had to make the researchers’ entry possible, offer a high and rich possibility of a mixed set of processes and realities that helped answer the research questions, and provide the researchers with the possibility of maintaining a continuous presence (Erlandson, Harris, & Skipper, 1993).

Sampling

Participants in this study included a purposeful and convenient sample and snowballing techniques of 10 individuals: two instructors, one principal, and seven parents. The principal and the instructors were purposefully selected since our target was clearly defined: A unique and well-running CHL school in the area. The parents were selected by the snowballing technique (Erlandson et al., 1993). This later technique was used to seek trustworthiness by not interviewing parents that could be known by the researchers (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Data Collection and Instruments

Data collection consisted of videotaped weekend instructions and observers’ notes during the non-participative observation. Researchers used regular video camera, personal iPad, and iPhone to videotape teaching practices on Sundays. An observational protocol was designed to help researchers in their task. Rationale for a non-participative observation of classroom instruction while exploring educators and parents’ perceptions responded to the authors’ quest of aligning or comparing the in-class observed teaching behavior to further opinions or perceptions on the Chinese literacy development.

Additionally, the researchers conducted semi-structured interviews to the two teachers, the principal, and parents of students. The teachers’ interview was made of eight principal questions which purpose was to explore the instructors’ perceptions/beliefs on the way students develop Chinese literacy, teaching styles and strategies, challenges, and successful stories in their classes. The authors also developed an interview protocol that consisted of four main questions to interview the school principal. Parents’ interview protocol helped the researchers gather their opinions (and testimony) on the development of Chinese literacy of their children via Sunday classes. All these interviews were recorded via the aforementioned electronic devices.

Finally, the researchers collected and took pictures of some artifacts that included visual and written data generated in the Sunday classroom, that were significant to the Chinese literacy development and that could carry values and ideologies (Freeman & Mathison, 2009; Saldaña, 2009).

Data Analysis

In each step of the research, data were prepared after collection, organized, and transcribed in order to

make sense (Creswell, 2009). In the non-participant observation phase, the researchers elaborated observational reports after reviewing the videos. Personal notes taken during the class observation helped completing their reports. The interviews were transcribed and coded. The analysis consisted of data interpretation and the reading through the transcribed or coded data in order to emerge a set of themes (Erlandson et al., 1993).

Artifacts were interpreted, according to the context, they were obtained (Freeman & Mathison, 2009). This was the application of descriptive coding which consisted of documenting the tangible products created and experienced on a daily basis by participants (Saldaña, 2009). Afterwards, observational, interview, artifacts, and other visual and written data were triangulated, i.e., confronted or compared to each other and brought together in the intent of answering the research questions. For the purpose of this study, the reference to observational data were made in the analysis section as to check back educators and parents' perceptions expressed during the interviews.

Data Report

Site Description

The CHL school was originally founded in 1990 by the Chinese association as an independent non-profit institution with a noble mission of providing the surrounding communities with a unique environment in learning Chinese language, culture, and heritage. According to the census, in 2010, the city hosting this school had a population of 305,215 persons. Of these, 59.7% were Hispanic or Latino, 33.3% White and non-Hispanic, 4.3% Black, and only 1.8% Asian. For the year 2013, the projected or the estimated population was of 316,381 persons (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014).

Description of Participants

Interview participants consisted of the CHL school principal, two teachers, and seven parents. The CHL school principal, a 50-55 years old woman from (the People's Republic of) China, holding a Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree from a U.S. mid-western (West North central) university, was also interviewed. Teacher 1, a female instructor of around 25 and 30 years old from China but living in the U.S. since a year ago, held an associate bachelor degree in business administration from a Chinese university. Teacher 2, a bilingual (Chinese-English) male instructor from China, aged between 40 and 45 years old, holding a master's degree and appointed assistant professor at a local college and living in the U.S. for 14 years, has been teaching at the CHL school for two years.

The interview participants, six females and one male, were given the following pseudonyms: Yao, Mao, Lees, Fen, Xin, Hen, and Tsui. Being all from China, they were ranged from 30 to 45 years old. They were one graduate student, one house-wife who used to be a accounting specialist, one computer programmer, three university faculty members, and one teacher. They all had two children born in the U.S., excepted for Hen who had only one child. Most have been living in the U.S. for more than 10 years: Two have been living for 13 years, two others for 12 years, one for 14 years, one for 15 years, and another for 10 years. They were/are all bilinguals but they recognized that they speak mostly Chinese at home to their children.

School Principal Interview

The school principal, ranging between 50 and 55 years old, restated that earlier in the 1990s, a group of old Chinese-Americans volunteered to teach their own American-born Chinese children. As one of the school co-founders, the principal admitted that by summer 1995 or 1996, she set up a camp to teach Chinese to the

kids, her daughter included, on Saturdays for an hour during two or three months. A lot of friends joined them and the summer camp experience was a big success. She was appointed to the principal position at the beginning of the school year 2003-2004.

The principal was one of the founder parents. Her motivation to get involved with starting a Chinese school came from a personal experience when her daughter was 5 or 6 years old in the summer of 1995-1996:

... With the help of other parents, I set up a summer camp to teach Chinese to kids every Saturday afternoon during an hour for two to three months. Then, a lot of friends joined us. Of course, we did other crafts and fun activities. It was a big success.

Asked about her perception of the teaching personnel of the school, the principal recognized that all the school teachers (seven in total) were volunteering. The majority of them had their children attending the same Sunday school. But there were also student teachers from a local college who wanted to gain some teaching experience. They had previously taught or they were from an education major. The principal was not as keen with them as she stated, "Student teachers are not stable. They would leave after they graduate or find other jobs. But parent teachers are relatively stable." These latter were waged on a weekly basis.

In regards to the curriculum, the principal recalled that the Chinese consulate in the U.S. recommended the use of the actual books. These books were published in 12 issues by the Xiwang School at the Jinan University in China and were particularly designed for oversea Chinese children. Adult learners, she said, were using supplemental drawing books also from a Chinese publisher. Finally, the principal perceived her responsibilities as to providing a platform for a better learning environment for students. However, she remained open to suggestions, "... I personally hope more young people could step in to help organize this school."

Teachers and Parents' Interview Themes

Four relevant themes emerged from teachers' and parents' interviews: (a) personal views on teaching practices; (b) views on Sunday class and parental involvement; (c) support of literacy at home; and (d) perceptions of school.

Personal views on teaching practices. Teacher 1 described her teaching style as motivating and promoting students' free thinking and speaking after telling stories: "By telling stories to the students, I hope the students will improve their listening skills and individual thinking skills in Chinese." Teacher 1's motivation to teaching seemed related to her cultural and linguistic identity:

When I saw these students talking to their parents in English while these latter tried to communicate with them in Chinese ... I felt they should master this language. Plus, China is well-developed now, so knowing the language well will benefit these kids.

Regardless of her teacher background in her natal China, Level 1 instructor never had training on language teaching principles, but she educated herself with materials found on the Internet. Nevertheless, she wished she could be formally trained either through professional developments or through higher education. She described her teaching practice as game-oriented. Teacher 1's views on assessment consisted of in-class questions and answers, and the review of homework. As she said, patience was the attitude that made her achieve teaching goals. The teacher pointed out her priority while teaching Level 1 students:

Now, I focus on teaching them how to read and speak, not necessary writing. But they would know how to write a simple word. When it comes to more complicated characters, they probably will only read them using the Pinyin.

She noticed that her students' weak skills were reading and writing. Thus, she suggested that parents

should reinforce these two language areas (but mostly reading) and foster the speaking of Chinese at home. This is how she perceived the family support of children's HL learning. She felt that enforcing the speaking of Chinese in class—but with a flexibility to bounce back to English when experiencing difficulties to explain something—improved their Chinese literacy.

Teacher 2 was proud of his two years experience flag of teaching levels 0-3 at the CHL school as well as his 10 years of teaching experience. He had training to teach in higher education. He clearly knew where his motivations to teach in that CHL school came from:

I love Chinese culture and history. When I was a student, I did very well on Chinese literacy, reading, and writing. I like to promote the Chinese culture and language [...]. At the same time, my kids are studying in this Chinese school; I want to encourage them to study Chinese as their L2.

As he perceived it, the most enjoyable part of his teaching practice was to witness the progress made by children on their Chinese and to see their smile in class. He confirmed that the school and class goal was to promote the Chinese culture in the city: "It [the CHL school] can be a window to show the importance of the Chinese-speaking world, and its global cultural, social, economic, and political impact."

In regard to assessing the student learning progress, the teacher usually relied on leaving them five pieces of: one per day starting Monday through Friday. On Sundays, children had two quizzes to check the writing and speaking of the previous lesson. Furthermore, he usually scheduled a review session: "Every three lessons, we have a review exercise in class." A mid-term exam and a final test are also applied in class.

Based on his practice, Teacher 2's perception of the way children learn and master Chinese characters followed a four-step demarche:

1. Teacher writes the two transcriptions (Pinyin and Chinese strokes) and explains the character on the board;
2. Students copy three times, form phrases, and make sentence with the phrases made;
3. Homework and exercise are given to reinforce the learning;
4. Quiz to take in the next class.

The instructor's view of how children can improve their Chinese literacy competences was aligned to a multitude of parameters: "Besides class and homework activities, student can maintain and improve their Chinese by speaking it more at home, reading some Chinese books, watching Chinese movies, and visiting China during vacations." In-class activities, he implemented to develop their literacy consisted of individual or group (team of two) reading aloud, speech in Chinese, writing essays in Chinese and English, and making projects and research on Chinese history and culture.

Pedagogically, Teacher 2 described his style as a combination of teacher-centered and student-centered approaches. However, "Most of the time, it is [a] formal authority type because of the students' age. If we have some project activities, I will become more as a facilitator." As for the communication or connection with children's parents, the teacher's perception was very favorable. He reported a deeper knowledge of each of the students since eight were attending the same public school as his children.

Views on Sunday class and family experience. Parents' reasons for wanting their children learn Chinese were multiple: cultural roots maintenance, literacy skill development, social interactions with other Chinese-American (new) friends, cultural benefits, communication with family members, and role models. This is what Yao said about sending her daughter to Sunday classes:

She started to see where the other students go after they finished the dance class, because she is in the dance class

(group). Right after the dance class, most of them went to the Sunday class. So, she said, "Oh, I wanna go." But that time she was too young with only four years old. But, after a year, we thought that it was good.

Children have been studying Chinese for at least one year, which is the minimal time new students spent at the CHL school. Some of them have been learning Chinese for three years. Regardless of the length children have been attending Sunday classes, parents recognized that, at school, they learned writing and reading of Chinese characters and the Pinyin, Chinese cultural components, customs, and traditions as proposed in the curriculum. As a result, at home, parents witnessed children's improvement in their reading and writing since they have been attending the CHL school. Yao, for instance, reported that one day while walking in China during a vacation, her daughter surprised her by reading a street sign:

One time, she was speaking (talking) to (about) the sign "小朋友" (xiao peng you) which means "little kid," she began to read really aloud (laughs) and said, "Oh yes, I can read this, it is 小月友 (xiao yue you)." And when we began to laugh, she got so embarrassed and said, "What is wrong?"

As for Mao's daughter, after attending the CHL school, she could tell jokes and play tongue twisters (same thing as Fen's daughter) and riddles with her friends in Chinese. Lees' son could read menus at Chinese restaurants or in Chinatown. Also, the class content helped identify himself as a Chinese-American who accepts the two identities. For Tsui, his daughter showed a great potential for learning a new language at the advantage of being the youngest in the class: She caught up with the other kids very quickly.

Nevertheless, parents reported challenging situations in their children's process of Chinese literacy development. Most difficulties originated from homework and assignments completion, and the time constraint between public school and Chinese school. Children either did not want to do homework or struggled to complete them. But Yao found that it was very challenging for her daughter to start with a "blank mind" (not knowing anything of Chinese writing). This situation increased the daughter's and parents' stress. In counterparts, Tsui faced his daughter resistance to learn Chinese, because his daughter did not see the necessity of learning it: "The major reason is that there is no chance for her to use the Chinese language very often. We speak only at home, and Sunday class only lasts about school about two hours."

Literacy development support from home. Parents reported a diversity of home support to the Chinese literacy development their children received. Watching TV shows (novels), prolonged stay in China with grandparents, summer travel to China where they had to practice their speaking and listening skills, family and grandparents' visit in the U.S., Chinese story books (even though some children did not like reading them), phone calls to grandparents in China, video conference sessions with family members in China, online cartoons (but Xin judged it inefficient for reading and writing), and regular home conversations in Chinese were the reinforcing activities mentioned by parents.

However, Yao reported a curious behavior of her daughter. She has been reluctant to speak Chinese outside or when she plays with her friends born in America:

Every one of them speaks English and Chinese but [...] they just play in and always speak English. I would think that they have a lot of identification issues. Most of them think that they do not want other kids tell them the difference.... They are born here, they speak English, they are part of the mainstream, they want other American kids in school view them as American kids.

Yao recalled that her daughter uses code switch at home, but warned her once she appeared in any kind of public school activity: "Mom, you have to speak to me in English, please do not embarrass me!"

Although most parents preferred to speak to their kids in Chinese at home, they usually did not make an issue when the kids later replied in English or in Chinese. Some of them admitted enforcing the use of Chinese as much as they can at home, as in the words of Hen: “Basically we only speak Chinese and we force him to respond in Chinese although sometimes he will choose to speak in English.”

Parents’ perceptions of school. To the question, to know to what degree Chinese Sunday classes affected their children’s literacy, participants were unanimous: Sunday classes affected their literacy a lot. Mao’s assurance was evident: “[...] She improved a lot after she attended Sunday school, because [...] she has no chance to practice it at home, and I am very satisfied with it.” Fen agreed wholeheartedly with the Mao: “Yes, very obvious, she improved a lot in Chinese literacy.” Tsui was entirely of other parents’ opinion by providing concreted examples of what his daughter could do to show the impact of Sunday classes in her literacy: “She practices more [...]. She can read the Chinese caption from TV.”

Consequently, parents’ overall perceptions of the school were positive. Yao appreciated the principal’s courage and the teachers’ sense of responsibility. She admired the class size that she found proportional to the city town. Mao applauded the communication between the teacher and the parents. But she requested more class hours:

I am very happy with the Chinese Sunday school. I like the communication between parents and teacher. But only two hours and half every week are completely not enough. If there is chance to increase the hours or maybe summer camps, it will be better.

Fen found that her daughter’s teacher was attentive to the kids’ needs and advocated for more class hours. Similarly, Tsui, Hen, Lees, and Fen cheered on the school communication. Lees especially praised the chances of children to perform in different festivals, such as the Chinese New Year celebration, Christmas, and Thanksgiving.

On the other hand, although she appreciated her son’s teacher hard work with the kids, Xin would love the instructor to adjust the lesson pace, so that students would “digest” what they have previously learned. Finally, Tsui did not want to compare the CHL school teaching practice to China’s: “I am very satisfied with the teaching at the Chinese Sunday school [...]. I know that it cannot be compared with the teaching in China, because they [in China] use the language all the day.” Conversely to other parents, Tsui found that it is not easy to keep a child sitting in a classroom for two hours. Thus, he would not ask for more instruction hours.

Artifacts and Visual Data

Quiz samples. Quiz samples 1, 2, and 3 (see Figures 1, 2, and 3) show the types of tests applied by Teacher 2 each Sunday in order to review the past week lesson. In samples 1 and 2, children wrote the vocabulary in Chinese characters except for the No. 6 in sample 1. The two samples suggested that the teacher wrote the Pinyin words on the board and children had to write the same words using the Chinese characters. Sample 3 showed the opposite demarche: from Pinyin to the characters.

On the second level of analysis, the teacher’s (correcting) style or method—better said the assistant’s style, because it was one of his assigned tasks—was transparent: a formal authority type. On a psychological level, the red ink has been accused to increase stress to students, or a symbol of negativity (Associated Press, 2012). However, this might be a reject of a teaching custom practiced over the years. Nevertheless, as the instructor was using a typical Chinese teaching practice, his assistant’s use of the red ink to correct students’ work can be justified and perhaps can culturally be loaded.

On a third level of the analysis, a systematic and particular grading system was notable. In the quiz sample 1, the student was given a full credit (100%) while the assisting teacher marked a mistake on the No. 8. In samples 2 and 3, similar marking habitué happened. The quiz was given a 99% of the grade and a 97% while two mistakes and four were respectively marked to samples 2 and 3. This showed that the teacher was giving high grades in order to motivate his students. However, on the bottom of the grades, the assisting teacher drew different pictures: a turtle, an insect, and a flower. This seemed so motivating and encouraging that children could not wait their papers to be turned back and started to like quizzes. It also meant the care the assisting teacher put to review each single quiz and personalize his feedback/correction.

Figure 1. Quiz sample 1, Student A (September 29, 2013).

Figure 2. Quiz sample 2, Student B (September 29, 2013).

Figure 3. Quiz sample 3, Student C (March 30, 2014).

Classroom pictures. Visual data analyzed here consisted of rooms pictures taken. Figure 4 shows one façade of the Level 1 classroom which represents a tabernacle, a temple, and a world map. Level 4 classroom shows two geographical maps of the world and of the Middle East (see Figure 5). In the middle, there are a small chalk board and a chalk eraser. The map on the left shows the regions where the Baptist Church missions are established.

Figure 6 is a caption of the Middle East, the North-Eastern of Africa, and the South-Eastern of Europe.

Figure 4. Wall pictures on the Level 1 classroom: the tabernacle, the temple, and the world map.

Figure 5. Front view of the classroom (Level 4).

Figure 6. Map on the right façade of the room (Level 4).

The picture on the right façade of the Level 4 classroom shows the places “Jesus walked.” It is a zoomed picture of the Figure 5 frontage maps. However, all these pictures had nothing to do directly with the Chinese literacy development. It is important to keep in mind that the CHL school was hosted by the Second Baptist Church. Therefore, the decoration or the facilities pictures had a religious purpose rather than academic. Considering the physical disposition of the pictures, the maps attract more than the board. The right façade map was even bigger than the pale board. It must be inferred that the academic plays a secondary role into the religious institution. Indeed, the researchers noticed that the church Sunday service or worship was always celebrated 15 minutes following the Sunday class.

Findings

Overall, beside the observations of the two teachers’ teaching, the researchers interviewed the aforementioned two teachers, the school principal, and seven parents (representing a 63.6% of the families that had their children in Level 4). Observation of teachers’ teaching, which took place during the 2013-2014 school year, was made by at least two researchers in 15 occasions, representing a 65.2% of face-to-face classes per level over the 23 Sunday classes from September 2013 to April 2014. The instruction was carried on in two

periods of 45 minutes with a 15-minute break. Student body of the levels observed was composed of six students (four girls and two boys) initially but of three (one girl and two boys) at the end of school year, aged 4-12 in Level 1, and of 11 children (six girls and five boys), aged 6-8 in Level 3. Students' equivalent level in public school was ranged from pre-kindergarten to Grade 7. Therefore, the abovementioned data were served to address the research questions.

What Are School Educators' and Parents' Perceptions on the Chinese Literacy Development of Second Generation of Chinese-American Children Attending Sunday Classes in South Texas?

The answer to this question requires the consideration of both observation and interview findings. In fact, the researchers observed that Teacher 1 used the Total Physical Response (TPR) strategy, mnemonics, visual teaching with flash cards and printed pictures, and relied on the audio lingual method (Larsen-Freeman, 2000) to teach vocabulary. To teach writing, she used the contrastive analysis or decomposition-composition strategy, an analytic technique of a pair of languages in order to detect structural or syntax differences and similarities (Mihalache, n.d.). For example, Teacher 1 taught Chinese characters by using the Pinyin Romanization and tones: “dā/搭” (high level tone), “dá/答” (rising tone), “dǎ/打” (falling rising tone), and “dà/大” (falling tone). For reading, she used in-class reading strategy consisted of group-reading strategy, small group (boys or girls only) reading, minimal pairs, and peer-reading strategies (two learners read together and sometimes self-corrected their mispronunciation), individual (sometimes guided by teachers) reading strategy, and repetition drill (imitation) techniques (Larsen-Freeman, 2000).

In contrast, Teacher 2 followed a formal instruction or the direct instruction method based on translation, or the grammar-translation approach, and the game-based instruction (Larsen-Freeman, 2000) to teach vocabulary. For instance, he wrote new words on the board using the Pinyin and Chinese characters and would randomly ask for the explanation. He would tell them in case of failure to correct the meaning. In other cases, he first explained new words in Chinese and then in English. His teaching writing strategy was similar to Teacher 1 who used contrastive analysis. For example, he taught children the Chinese punctuation by comparing it to English. Structurally and conversely to English, since the Chinese is a topographic language, he used the step by step or stroke by stroke technique to help children write a new Chinese character. In other words, teachers instructed the students on how to decompose and compose Chinese characters. For example, “景” can be decomposed into “日” and “京”. Additionally, Teacher 2 used a discriminatory-scaffolding technique, consisting of minimization of errors through the mastered of the prerequisite skills (Beale, 2005), to help children remember and recognize the characters previously learned by writing the already learned characters similar to the newest to be learned. In other words, the instructor was using the motor learning and memory mode (Ghilardi, 1984). Also, Teacher 2 used the same strategies than his Level 1 colleague for reading.

However, for the speaking skill, the two instructors observed taught their classes in the Chinese language with little use of English when needed. They used a question-answered strategy. Students most likely were speaking in English between them and sometimes when they had to address to the teacher. Both teachers were enforcing the use of Chinese during the class time. In addition and in particular, Teacher 1 often used the audio lingual strategy to foster the Chinese speaking skill of her students: Songs and recitals were used without any direct reference to English.

From the teaching behavior observed, it can be deduced that teachers' perceptions reflected a high level of responsibility and commitment. Their actions as educators were based on the inner conception of being Chinese.

In other words, the degree of dedication and commitment observed in their teaching practices revealed the awareness level of cultural and linguistic maintenance. Therefore, it can be deduced that teachers perceived the Chinese literacy development of second generation Chinese-American children as an obligation to fulfill. This perception of obligation, commitment, and responsibility, through the use of several teaching strategies observed, was confirmed in the teachers' interview.

Teacher 1, for instance, felt that children who usually talk to their parents in English even though parents spoke Chinese "should master this language." Further in the interview, she restated, "Right, I think they should be able to know Chinese." The modal "should" used here confirmed the idea of obligation, thus, commitment. Interpretatively, obligation for Teacher 1 was related to the notion of identity: This is, the belonging (through birth) to a certain ethnic group forced individuals to behave in a certain way. Children must follow the mainstream. Moreover, Teacher 1 perceived that teaching efficacy was depending on students' enjoyment of classes. This is why she introduced stories and funny activities in her teaching.

Similarly, Teacher 2's perception of the development of Chinese literacy through his teaching practice was seen as an obligation after curtsying Chinese culture and history. But obligation in him meant promotion the Chinese culture and language, as he stated in the interview: "... I like to promote the Chinese culture and language ... I want to encourage them to study Chinese ...". Furthermore, teachers reflected their commitment and sense of responsibility or obligation toward the development of Chinese literacy in the way they organized the instructional environment: A family-type like class setting for Teacher 1, and a traditional formal-authority type class setting for Teacher 2.

Likewise, the school principal's perception of the development of Chinese literacy showed the same pattern: from the home culture awareness and identity to the commitment and promotion of her native culture and language based on her family experience (her daughter). Therefore, she depicted herself as a motivator of the Chinese literacy development. For her, motivation was linked to teachers' volunteering dispositions as long as most of them were trained to teaching from their other jobs and were parents of second generation students attending the CHL school.

As for parents, their perceptions of their children's Chinese literacy development were also guided by their cultural and linguistic descent. They perceived that the Chinese literacy development was inheritance: Children must keep the Chinese heritage, so that they would be able to socialize with family members. This is why most of them supported the learning of Chinese at home. Moreover, they favorably viewed children's literacy development at Sunday classes, because despite challenges faced by HLLs, parents could witness children's progress through daily examples and real life situations. In other words, their perceptions were very positive and matched teachers' views and teaching practices or convictions. Justification for such similarity viewing the literacy development of HLLs was deduced from the similar status shared by both parents and teachers: Both sides had children attending Sunday classes. Thus, a sense of responsibility and attentiveness to the kids was also inferred in their perceptions.

How Do School Educators and Parents Express Their Views on the Chinese Literacy Development of Second Generation of Chinese-American Children Attending Sunday Classes in South Texas?

The way school educators and parents expressed their views on the Chinese literacy development of second generation of Chinese-American children was deduced from both the observation and the interview data. Indeed, from the non-participant observation, data showed that the school principal was enthusiastic and showed a great level of satisfaction. During the interview, she repeated three times the same idea contained in

the following statement: “This Chinese school served as a good platform and I hope it can continue to provide Chinese kids with the opportunity to learn the language and our heritage culture.”

Although she was nervous at the beginning of the interview, Teacher 1 passionately expressed herself on her students’ literacy development process. Passion rhymed with enthusiasm in her voice and in her teaching behavior as observed. She usually utilized personal materials (iPad and smartphone) to compensate the school lack of pedagogical resources, and teaching strategies, such as TPR, game-based, etc., aimed at captivating children. By contrast, Teacher 2 expressed his views in a calm way. He was confident in what he was saying. The confidence came from his 10-year teaching experience. He was convinced that such schools could have a global, cultural, social, and economic impact in the local community.

As for most parents, they enthusiastically expressed their views on the Chinese literacy development of their children. Since they witnessed palpable progress at home, they joyfully and confidently voiced their perceptions. There was also a sort of spontaneity emanating from their answers and remarks during the interview. This spoke a lot of their satisfaction with the school as this latter was fulfilling their wish. Only one of the parents seemed frustrated due to the fact that her daughter was complaining a lot and was reluctant to attend Sunday class. Basically, this daughter was experiencing a sort of “homesick” due to a recent move from Georgia where she grew up to Texas.

Conclusions and Implications

This research study aimed at exploring school educators’ and parents’ perceptions of Chinese literacy development of second generation of Chinese-American children through Sunday classes. A qualitative research design with a multiple data collection was necessary to answer our research questions. A 7-month period of non-participant observation of the CHL Sunday classes was adopted to describe educators’ perceptions of the Chinese literacy development through their teaching strategies. Teaching strategies reflected teachers’ commitment, responsibility, obligation, and home-country cultural awareness and identity. Accordingly, educators’ and parents’ interview data corroborated to some extent what was observed.

Furthermore, findings were consistent with previous studies on the development of CHL weekend classes across the U.S.:

1. Practically, in the CHL school, bilingual instruction happened. Learners and sometimes the teachers used both Chinese and English to communicate (Donghui & Slaughter-Defoe, 2009; Hornberger, 1990; Zhang & Koda, 2011).

2. Literacy was not only a school matter. Even though children were sent to the CHL school to improve their writing and reading skills, parents also collaborated in this task. Myriad of means, such as TV shows, family trip to China, grandparents’ visit in the U.S., etc., were used by parents for this purpose. These means were part of children’s funds of knowledge (Moll, 1992).

3. Identity issues and socio-cultural struggles (Hornberger & Wang, 2008) were evident in the teaching practices, and in what parents reported about their kids. Some children were reluctant to learn Chinese or to speak it in public since they were living in the U.S..

4. The observed CHL school was a non-profit organization (Wang, 1996). Therefore, it might entail the “classic” problematic of its genre as evoked in the literature. One of the teachers recognized that he was volunteering. However, it was rather a giving-back-to-school-attitude for having his son attending Sunday classes than a volunteering act.

5. However, in contrast to the lack of professional identity that most teachers of the non-profit Chinese schools showed in previous studies (Hsu-Pai et al., 2011; Lawton & Logio, 2009), teachers in this study showed a strong commitment and sense of professional identity to their teaching practice. The school principal evoked that when school had to rely on student teachers in the past, such lack of professional identity (as revealed in the literature) occurred: Most of the time, student teachers would quit the Sunday school teaching job once they got a better (well-paid) position somewhere else.

Finally, from the research findings presented above, implications to be mentioned here can also be considered as suggestions for further research:

1. One of the legitimate claims received from parents was to assign (attribute) more hours to the Sunday classes. This claim would infer the revision of the school status that would change from a non-profit to a for-profit organization. Multiple implications would stem from this change, i.e., the teaching preparation, the schedule change (classes during the week), the curriculum elaboration and development or election: bilingual or HL curriculum, etc..

2. Further adoption of or further conversion of the CHL school into a bilingual education English-Chinese program in this region of the U.S. was likely desired by the principal. Therefore, scholars, administrators, and teachers involved in the promotion of the CHL should look at the bilingual education programs (English-Chinese) that are already developed and running in other states, such as California.

3. Regarding the teaching practice, there was a slight “tension” that could be implicitly deducted by confronting the teaching philosophy and the students’ reality. Teacher 2’s formal authority or formal instruction philosophy used in China would need an adjustment in order to be applied in the U.S., because these children are living in a different setting; they are not living in China. Even though children can quickly adapt their behavior and learning styles to each teacher, an adaptive work should be made by teachers. Failure to doing so would result in assimilationist attitudes, which could take a colonialist image, e.g., a teacher from China imposes Chinese realities to American-born Chinese in the U.S. (Ekiaka-Oblazamengo & Ekiaka-Nzai, 2014).

4. There should be a need for redefining the qualifications of HL teachers to ensure and effective literacy development of the second generation Chinese-American children.

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