

Family and Heritage Language Maintenance:
Parents' and Children's Attitudes over the Years

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Abstract

Heritage language maintenance is a very important problem for immigrant families. Out of varied considerations, more and more Chinese immigrant parents pay attention to their children's heritage language maintenance. In order to explore Chinese immigrant parents' and children's attitudes toward heritage language maintenance, and how age plays a role in children's heritage language development, this qualitative study recruited participants from a heritage language school in Montreal and collected data through interviews. Findings indicate that most Chinese immigrant parents believe that learning Chinese is important and they hold positive attitudes towards Chinese learning. However, they placed greater importance on speaking and listening skills and have higher expectations on the two skills. The children's different attitudes toward the four skills were consistent with their parents. Besides, the parents gradually handed the responsibility of heritage language learning to their children over time and the children presented growth autonomy of their Chinese learning. In addition, both parents and children preferred for school support. The parents decided to enroll their children in the Chinese weekend school instead of teaching their children themselves at home.

Keyword: Heritage language maintenance, Immigrant families, Attitudes, Age

Résumé

Le maintien de la langue d'héritage constitue un problème très important pour les familles immigrantes. Pour des raisons diverses, de plus en plus de parents immigrants d'origine chinoise prêtent attention au maintien de la langue d'héritage chez leurs enfants. Dans le but d'explorer les attitudes des parents et des enfants immigrants chinois envers le maintien de leur langue d'héritage, et comment l'âge joue un rôle dans le développement de la langue d'héritage chez les enfants, nous avons recruté des participants à une école de langue en enseignement du chinois à Montréal et recueilli des données en menant des entrevues. Les résultats indiquent que la plupart des parents immigrants chinois trouvent l'apprentissage du chinois important et qu'ils adoptent une attitude positive à l'égard de l'apprentissage de la langue. Cependant, ils accordaient une plus grande importance aux compétences de l'expression et la compréhension orales et attendent plus de ces deux compétences. Différentes attitudes de la part des enfants à l'égard des quatre compétences étaient conformes à celles de leurs parents. En outre, au fil du temps, les parents ont progressivement laissé la responsabilité d'apprendre la langue d'origine à leurs enfants, tandis que les enfants ont développé une autonomie de leur apprentissage de cette langue en grandissant. De plus, les parents et les enfants préféraient demander de l'aide à l'école. Les parents ont décidé d'inscrire leurs enfants à des cours de fin de semaine du chinois au lieu de leur enseigner eux-mêmes à la maison.

Mot-clé: Le maintien de la langue d'héritage, Les familles immigrantes, Attitudes, Age

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Chapter 1 Introduction

Canada is a linguistically and culturally diverse country with immigrants, refugees, and temporary residents such as international students and workers. They come from all over the world and started their new journey in Canada. One problem that these immigrants have been faced with is language choice, that is, how to maintain their and their children's heritage language in the English and French dominated language environment.

During the several years I have studied in Canada, I've met many Chinese immigrant families and listened to their stories about the learning and loss of their children's heritage language. Some parents regretted that they did little to promote the heritage language maintenance of their children, while some parents maintain the heritage language with difficulty. At the crossroads of maintaining ethnic language and being assimilated into the mainstream culture, the parents and children in Chinese immigrant families face a tough dilemma (Luo & Wiseman, 2000). In order to maintain a positive ethnic identity and effective communication in the family, immigrant parents hope their children will learn Chinese. On the other hand, the parents also believe that French and English is the foundation of their children's outstanding performance in Montreal. Without question, heritage language maintenance is such an important issue for immigrant families and their children. There is evidence that heritage language maintenance could facilitate communication among family members and ultimately consolidate the family relationship (Hashimoto & Lee, 2011; Yan, 2013). Besides, heritage language is an important way to accessing the heritage culture, and heritage culture also boosts children's heritage language maintenance (Guardado, 2002; Hashimoto & Lee, 2011). Moreover, parents believe that bilingual or multilingual ability is an asset for academic and job market success (Krashen, 2000). Therefore, heritage language maintenance deserves more attention from parents,

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language schools, and researchers.

According to the Canada Census Bureau report, 20% of Canada's population reported speaking a language other than English or French at home. Canada's most recent census was conducted in 2016, at the time the population was counted at 35,121,728, and people who identified as originally being from China made up 5.1% of the population (Canada Census Bureau, 2016). Due to the increase in China's international power and the increasingly close dependency among business cooperation and political ties, more and more Chinese immigrants have decided to pass on their heritage language to their Canadian-born children. Such trend appeared not only in Canada but also in the United States. Zhang and Slaughter-Defoe (2009) found that more and more American schools offer instruction in Chinese in order to meet the needs of Chinese immigrants.

Notably, research on attitudes toward heritage language maintenance has made headway from different perspectives. Regarding the relationship between attitudes and heritage language maintenance, researchers found that parents' positive attitudes toward the heritage language will facilitate its development (Bradley and Bradley, 2013; Tse, 2000). Some researchers have examined Chinese parents' attitudes toward supporting their children's acquisition of the heritage language, finding that most immigrant parents do hold a positive attitude toward the HL maintenance of their children (Li, 2006; Zhang & Slaughter-Defoe, 2009). However, although parents were nominally very supportive of their children learning Chinese, Lao (2004) found that there was a gap existed between parents' expectations and their actual practices. When parents' attitudes were examined by many studies, little attention has been paid to the most important object in HL maintenance - the children. What are children's attitudes towards HL maintenance? Are there common patterns in children's attitudes towards their heritage language? To what

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extent does age contribute to children's attitudes? For example, are younger children, who tend to be more influenced by their parents, also more influenced by a positive or negative parental opinion? Are older, conceivably more independent children, less influenced by their parents' attitudes or family language policy?

In addition, the methods to examine parent's and children's attitudes were well worth discussing, and attitudes toward heritage language usually seen as a whole in previous studies (Li, 2006; Park & Sarkar, 2007; Zhang & Slaughter-Defoe, 2009). In order to have a comprehensive understanding of parents' and children's attitudes, this study will explore their attitudes toward heritage language maintenance from specific aspects. Among the many possible ways to define "attitude", this study selected the one proposed by Colin Baker in *Attitudes and Language* (1992). In this book, Baker broke the term "attitude" down into three components: cognition (beliefs), affect (feelings and emotions), and actions (behaviours, plans, decisions). This study will, therefore, explore parents' and children's cognition, affect, and actions in relation to heritage language maintenance for the purpose of comprehensively understanding their attitudes.

In this study, I will explore Chinese immigrant parents' and children's attitudes toward heritage language maintenance, by which I hope to uncover knowledge about heritage language learners, their parents, and how age plays a role in heritage language development. To do so, this research study applied qualitative research methods, namely, semi-structured interviews. In order to understand participants' attitudes toward heritage language maintenance, thematic analysis was adopted to analyze and interpret the results of interviews.

In this chapter, the significance of heritage language maintenance and its relationship with attitudes were introduced. After, the researcher's purpose for the study was presented. In Chapter Two, the Literature Review, the literature on attitudes and heritage language

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maintenance will be reviewed. This chapter will also introduce parent's and children's attitudes toward the heritage language maintenance separately, as well as the reasons behind their attitudes. After, in Chapter 3, the methodology chapter, the research questions, the recruitment of participants, and the procedures of data collection will be presented. Subsequently, in Chapter 4, the Results chapter, the thematic findings from the data will be presented. Later, in Chapter 5, the Discussion chapter, the researcher will interpret the findings and try to answer the research questions. Lastly, the Conclusion chapter will provide implications of this study and reflect on this study's limitations. Based on the limitations of this study, the researcher will suggest directions for future research.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

This chapter will review literature on attitudes and heritage language maintenance, including the interpretation of attitudes and heritage language maintenance, the current situation of Chinese learning as a heritage language, and parents' and children's attitudes toward heritage language maintenance examined in previous studies.

2.1 Heritage Language and Heritage Language Maintenance

In the first place, it is necessary to define heritage languages and heritage language learners. Coming from the Spanish language development context, Guadalupe Valdés, at Stanford University, formulated a basic definition about *heritage language* and *heritage language learners*. According to Valdés (2005), the term *heritage language* refers to nonsocietal and nonmajority languages spoken by groups often known as linguistic minorities. Such minorities include populations who are either indigenous to a particular region of a present-day nation-state or populations that have migrated to areas other than their own regions or nations of origin (Valdés, 2005). Wiley (2014) stated that the term *heritage language* is widely used in reference to indigenous, colonial, and immigrant languages, which has led to multiple definitions based on program, learner type, community need, and language use. Broadly, Van Deusen-Scholl (2001) defined the term *heritage language* as a part of that person's family or cultural heritage. In other words, the heritage language may not be the language still spoken in the home, the person may have no functional proficiency in the language and would most likely have to study that language as a second language learner. Similar definitions were also presented in a study by Hornberger and Wang's (2008). However, Polinsky and Kagan (2007) narrowly defined *heritage language* as being "first in the order of acquisition but not completely acquired because of the individual's switch to another dominant language." In the same vein, Lee (2018) suggested that a

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heritage language is acquired as a first language and is often interrupted by the acquisition of a second language. Based on the schooling environment in the United States, Kelleher (2010) proposed that English is the predominant language of schooling, and languages other than English are typically considered foreign languages. However, some students have a connection to the foreign language through their family and some proficiency in it. Therefore, for those students, the foreign language they have a connection to is their heritage language. In this study, *heritage language* will be understood from Kelleher's (2010) definition, which means the language Chinese is identified as the heritage language other than the dominant language (French and English) in Montreal.

Based on the term *heritage language*, heritage language learners differ significantly from foreign language learners. For example, Kelleher (2010) discussed that Chinese heritage language learners are people who are proficient in Chinese or who have a Chinese cultural connection and are studying Chinese. Campbell and Rosenthal (2000) also pointed out that heritage language learners differ from foreign language learners in their knowledge and competencies of phonology, grammatical rules, vocabulary, sociolinguistics rules, culture, literacy skills, and motivation.

When we talk about heritage language maintenance, the theoretical underpinnings of this field can be traced back to Fishman's seminal language maintenance and shift research. Fishman (1991) distinguished between "language transmission" and "language maintenance." In particular, "language transmission" means the passing of a heritage language to young children in a family context, while "language maintenance" refers to the 'post-transmission process' that occurs in a wider society and is aimed at further development of the language that has been transmitted. Many researchers, like Fishman (2014), advocated that heritage languages be valued

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and dignified for the benefit both of individuals and society. In addition, inter-generational language transmission is the most important element of language maintenance in Fishman's GIDS model. Additionally, Wang and Green (2003, p. 171) pointed out that the heritage language maintenance plays a significant role in the process of heritage language and culture transmission from one generation to the next. Besides, the heritage language is both the emotional connection between language learners and their families and a critical factor that helps language learners establish a positive ethnic identity (Guardado, 2002; Hashimoto & Lee, 2011) and brings them practical advantages in the job market (Lao, 2004).

Although the benefits brought by heritage language maintenance are meaningful, the tasks of heritage language maintenance are challenging and serious. Veltman (1983) determined that the loss of the heritage language typically occurred across three generations. Subsequent studies have found similar patterns (Alba, Logan, Lutz & Stulis, 2002; Pew Hispanic Center, 2004). Rumbaut (2009) indicated even more rapid loss of heritage languages by examining a sample of more than 5000 participants representing of 77 first languages. In particular, the current situation of heritage language maintenance, especially the maintenance of Chinese in North America, is unsatisfactory. There is evidence that Chinese immigrant children show obvious decline in their heritage language fluency when their English proficiency improves, especially when the children enter the school-age period (Hinton, 2001; Liu, 2008). By collecting data from 28 children who from a large southwestern border city in the U.S., the results found that Chinese immigrant children are unable to speak Chinese, and they are at best semi-speakers of the heritage language by the end of the high school years (Liu, 2008). Jia (2008) pointed that most Chinese heritage language learners who are born in the United States or immigrate at young ages develop Chinese proficiency below the native level, and those who immigrate to the U.S. at

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older ages “maintain the native level or close to the native level Chinese. (p.190)” Zhang (2008) also found that most school-aged Chinese children in the United States developed unbalanced bilingualism and biliteracy. The unbalanced bilingualism refers to those Chinese immigrant children who have much higher English proficiency level than their Chinese proficiency. According to Zhang, unbalanced biliteracy means that the majority of these children understand Chinese when spoken to and some can speak Chinese fluently, but most of them have low levels of Chinese literacy.

2.2 Attitudes toward Heritage Language Maintenance

Having established that there are obstacles in maintaining a heritage language, along with the importance of heritage languages, I will turn to research on the influences in heritage language maintenance and on how to effectively promote heritage language maintenance. The relationship between attitudes and language acquisition was proposed by Lukmani (1972) in discussing an individual’s motivation in learning a given language. Lukmani proposed that language learners’ motivation is based on their attitudes toward the community and people who speak the language; their attitudes toward learning the language in question; and their attitudes toward language learning in general. Masgoret and Gardner (2003) also discussed the relationship between attitudes and language acquisition in their socioeducational model. They Researchers have found attitude to be an important factor in heritage language maintenance. Bradley and Bradley (2013) mentioned that a crucial factor in language maintenance is speakers’ attitude toward the language and the speech community. Tse (2000) examined published studies of U.S. heritage language speakers who were of Asian descent to discover the relationships among attitudes, motivation, and heritage language development. She concluded that heritage language acquisition is facilitated when an individual has positive attitudes toward the language

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and feels positively about their ethnic group. In a study examining links between second language acquisition and acculturation and cultural identity in 102 Chinese students attending a Canadian university, Young and Gardner (1990) also mentioned that attitudinal variables related to aspects of language proficiency, thus they emphasized the role of language attitudes in the development of minority language skills.

Concerning heritage language maintenance, there are different attitudes presented by parents and children. Crawford (2000) found that immigrants who seek to retain their original language have often met with negative attitudes in the dominant culture. In fact, immigrant families take most of the responsibility of heritage language learning, thus the attitudes toward heritage language maintenance from the perspective of family members deserves more attention.

2.3 Parents' Attitudes toward Heritage Language

From the perspective of parents, the literature shows that most immigrant parents in North America hold positive attitudes toward their children's heritage language learning and maintenance, though the positivity varied in terms of degree and language emphasis. Under the general positive attitudes, some parents adopt a rigid schedule for their children's heritage language maintenance, and some parents put more emphasis on listening and speaking skills. In Lao's (2004) study, more than half of the participants held positive attitudes toward their children's Chinese proficiency, and the parents hoped that their children's Chinese proficiency could reach middle school to high school level. In Canada, Li's (2006) study found that all of the participating parents expected their children to become biliterate and multilingual (Mandarin, Cantonese, and English). These findings are not limited to Chinese families. Immigrant families that speak other heritage languages also presented positive attitudes toward heritage language maintenance. For example, Park and Sarkar (2007) found Korean immigrant parents to be very

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positive toward their children's heritage language maintenance. Guardado (2002) did a qualitative study aiming to explore the loss and maintenance of Spanish in Hispanic children in Vancouver from the perspective of parents. He found that the participating Spanish-speaking parents emphasized the importance of heritage language literacy. However, not all immigrant parents support heritage language maintenance. For instance, one Spanish-speaking parent identified by Suarez's (2002) study held the opposite stance on heritage language maintenance. Besides, some studies found that immigrant parents' attitudes varied regarding the importance of their children learning the four skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing). For instance, when Liao and Larke (2008) explored the reasons why parents decide to send their children to Chinese heritage schools, the reason mentioned most frequently by parents is that they expected their children to master conversational and reading skills, but not writing skills. Conversely, in Hashimoto and Lee's (2011) study, the participants from three Japanese immigrant families in the United States placed more emphasis on literacy skills than on oral skills.

Behind the positive attitudes, researchers keep trying to explain why parents generally hold such attitudes toward heritage language maintenance. The literature showed that heritage language maintenance is important to families for different reasons. Firstly, the maintenance of a heritage language is thought to be significant in shaping cultural identities (Fishman, 2001). Heritage language maintenance has an important impact on tradition transmission and internalization (Brown, 2011; Li, 2006; Liao & Larke, 2008). Therefore, parents believed that maintaining the heritage language is conducive to shaping children's positive ethnic identity (Brown, 2011; Kang, 2012; Lao, 2004). Heritage language is the key to accessing the heritage culture, and heritage culture also boosts children's heritage language maintenance (Guardado, 2002; Hashimoto & Lee, 2011). Ennser-Kananen (2012) explored the language attitudes of seven

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high school senior students in a suburban U.S. American German foreign language classroom and how they might impact one Latina student's language use and identity construction.

According to the analysis of the focal student "Karla", the researcher found that the discouragement of children's mother tongue could cause a harmful effect on their cultural identity development. As a result, the transmission of ethnic culture and values, which are more than just language, may be obstructed (Lee, 2013).

Secondly, the significance of heritage language maintenance to the parents lies in its potential benefits to children's future development. On the one hand, parents believe that bilingual or multilingual ability is an asset for academic and job market success (Krashen, 2000), thus the loss of a heritage language might weaken children's competitive power. Guardado (2002) found similar opinions in his study: parents thought that knowing more languages would lead to children gaining more economic benefits and becoming more capable in the job market. The benefits of being bilingual were not limited to the country they lived in. Some parents also believe that they might get a better job in their home country (Kang 2012; Lee, 2013; Li, 2006). On the other hand, parents also believed that heritage language maintenance would have cognitive benefits because their children will be bilingual or multilingual (Lao, 2004; Zhang & Slaughter-Defoe, 2009). Parents' belief about the benefits of being bilingual or multilingual was proved by many studies. Lambert (1975), for instance, claimed that bilingual students had a more flexible and diverse structure both in intelligence and in thought. In the same vein, Cummins and Swain (1979) discussed a number of positive effects brought by bilingualism on cognitive development such as academic success, flexible thinking, and improvement of linguistic skills. Bialystok and Craik (2010) also found that bilinguals exhibit enhanced executive control in nonverbal tasks requiring conflict resolution. Therefore, parents hold it essential for their

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children to learn and maintain heritage language.

Lastly, heritage language maintenance is necessary for effective communication at home. Parents promote children's heritage language maintenance in order to facilitate communication among family members and ultimately consolidate the family relationship (Hashimoto & Lee, 2011; Yan, 2013). Luo and Wiseman (2000) also found that family cohesiveness is positively associated with immigrant children's heritage language maintenance. Due to different reasons like parents' limited English language proficiency (Zhang, 2010; Nesteruk, 2010), the shift and even loss of a heritage language would present an obstacle to communication between family members, and even to a certain degree, impair the familial bond (Fillmore, 2000; Liang, 2018). This is especially true when communication occurs or fails to occur between children and their grandparents (Kang, 2012; Liao & Larke, 2008; Nesteruk, 2010; Park & Sarkar, 2007).

Researchers have also explored parents' actions concerning heritage language maintenance. There is evidence that parents proactively promote heritage language maintenance at home. Some adopt a heritage language only policy (Kung, 2013; Leung & Uchikoshi, 2012). The participating parents in Li's (2006) study reported that they asked their children to respond to them in Chinese. Yan (2013) did a quantitative study in which the survey data showed that most of the time the Chinese-speaking parents used Chinese at home with their children. Similarly, Leung and Uchikoshi's (2012) study surveyed 56 Chinese immigrant families, of which 41 used Cantonese only at home. Such language practices were also found in some Korean (Park & Sarkar, 2007) and Spanish (Guardado, 2002) speaking immigrant families. Additionally, immigrant parents practiced lots of specific activities like watching cartoons in the heritage language, listening to radio, and reading books together (Kung, 2013; Lao, 2004; Li, 2006; Park & Sarkar, 2007). For instance, in his 2004 study, Lao surveyed 86 parents and found

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that 65.3% of Chinese speaking parents read stories in Chinese to their children. Some parents even tried to teach the heritage language to their children in a formal, classroom-type manner at home, but unfortunately, the pedagogy and the learning materials failed to draw children's interests or meet their needs (Hashimoto & Lee, 2011).

Although studies show that immigrant parents take many actions to maintain their children's heritage language, the studies have also found that parents encounter more difficulties to heritage language maintenance as the children grew older. Specifically, some parents have limited energy and time to take care of children's heritage language learning. This is confirmed by Yan's (2003) study. Yan (2003) did a survey study in which the data showed that 37% of Chinese immigrant parents stated that they have limited time to teach their children heritage language at home. As a result, many parents decided to enroll their children in heritage language schools. As Jeon (2008) and Li (2006) mentioned, the prevalent practice among immigrant parents to maintain their children's heritage language is to send them to heritage language schools/programs.

2.4 Children's Attitudes toward Heritage Language

As the central figures in heritage language maintenance, the children deserve attention as well. However, few studies have directly surveyed children's attitudes, and most documents about children's attitudes came from the parent's descriptions or researchers' observations. For example, Korean immigrant parents interviewed in Kang (2012) and Brown (2011) declared that their children increased English use after starting K-12 schooling and did not want to speak Korean. In Lee's (2013) studies, the parents reflected that children spoke English instead of the heritage language with their siblings and other co-ethnic peers. Particularly, younger siblings were found to use English more often than the older siblings. This phenomenon also appeared in

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Guardado's (2002) and Nesteruk's (2010) studies. Children in their studies rarely spoke their heritage language with their friends even when they shared the same heritage language. Parents believed that sending their children to heritage language school was one way to support their children's heritage language learning and development, but the parents also mentioned that their children's attitudes were opposite to the parents' expectations. There is evidence suggesting that children are resistant to going to heritage language school and most of them expressed that they are forced to do so (Brown, 2011; Jeon, 2008; Kang, 2012).

Some researchers also explored the changes in children's attitudes toward heritage language maintenance over time and as they grew older. In Hashimoto and Lee's (2011) study, some Japanese immigrant parents stated that learning the heritage language to maintain a connection to their roots and to maintain their Japanese identity no longer sounded persuasive to their children as they got older. The children showed a decreasing interest in heritage language learning. In order to carry out a qualitative study investigating attitudes toward heritage language maintenance among Chinese immigrant parents and their second-generation children, Zhang and Slaughter-Defoe (2009) collected data from 18 Chinese immigrant families, who were selected largely from two important Chinese communities in Philadelphia: University City with its surrounding suburban areas, and Chinatown with Chinese-speaking areas in its close proximity. In this study, the researcher specifically explained the changing process of children's attitudes toward heritage language maintenance. At young ages, many heritage language learners found the learning activities to be "interesting and entertaining" (p.89) and they had less academic pressure from public school. Thus, they showed enthusiasm for Chinese learning and the heritage language school. However, children's learning attitudes changed when they "matured and moved up the educational ladder" (p. 89). The main reason for this was that they found the Chinese

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writing system to be too complex (Liu, 2008; Zhang & Slaughter-Defoe, 2009). They also faced increasingly challenging academic tasks in public school, and thus they had less time for the Chinese heritage school. As a result, many young Chinese students gradually shifted their language preference from Chinese to English (Liu, 2008). Yet, when examining factors which affected heritage language education among six second-generation Chinese American adolescents, the researcher found that older heritage language learners showed more motivation to learn Chinese (Lei, 2012). They took the initiative to interact with their ethnic peers in Chinese and understand heritage culture as an important ability (Lu & Li, 2008). Moreover, many second- or 1.5-generation Chinese immigrants expressed regret at not having a high level of proficiency in Chinese after they go to college, and want their children to learn Chinese (Hinton, 2001; Huang, 2012).

In conclusion, this chapter presented definitions of heritage language and heritage language maintenance and reviewed the literature on the relationship between attitudes and heritage language maintenance, as well as on parents' and children's attitudes toward heritage language maintenance. As mentioned above, the research on children's attitudes mainly relies on parents' descriptions or researchers' observations. Besides, most studies have focused on one specific age group, but seldom recruited participants from different age groups to see children's differential attitudes across time and the influence of age on children's HL maintenance. In the next chapter, I will present the research questions, the recruitment of participants, and the procedures of data collection.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Research Questions and Design

The present study aims to investigate how Chinese parents and their children perceive heritage language maintenance, as well as the actions they have taken or plan to take in order to maintain their heritage language. Based on the main goal of the study, three questions were designed to guide this research:

1. What are Chinese immigrant parents' attitudes towards Chinese heritage language maintenance?
2. What are Chinese immigrant children's attitudes towards Chinese heritage language maintenance?
3. Do children show different patterns of attitudes towards Chinese heritage language maintenance depending on their age group?

In this study, the term *attitude* will be interpreted from three aspects according to Colin Baker (1992): cognition (beliefs), affect (feelings and emotions), and actions (behaviors, plans, decisions). In the current study, therefore, data about parent's and children's cognition, affect, and actions in relation to HL maintenance were collected using semi-structured interviews with both children from three different age groups (5–8yrs; 9–11yrs; 12–15yrs) and their parents. These interviews were then analysed using thematic analysis.

3.2 Recruitment

The main goal of the present study was to explore Chinese immigrant parents' and children's attitudes toward heritage language maintenance, as well as how age plays a role in heritage language development. Thus, three age groups of children and their parents who were

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already enrolled in a Chinese weekend school in Montreal were recruited for this research. The researcher chose this site to recruit participants for three reasons. First, all children that participated in this study were currently enrolled in a Chinese weekend school and the teachers in the school were very supportive of studies about heritage language maintenance. Thus, it was easy for the researcher to access and collect data. Second, students enrolled in the Chinese weekend school represent a range of age groups and they are generally enrolled in different grades based on their age, which was a good fit with the research design. Last, the courses provided by the school are voluntary and interest-oriented. Therefore, the decision to enroll children in the Chinese courses reflects parents' or children's perception of the importance of heritage language to a certain degree.

Before starting the research, an ethics proposal was submitted to and approved by the university's research ethics board. With permission from the university's ethics board, the researcher sent an email to the school authorities to seek approval to conduct the study. In the email, the researcher explained the research purpose, the research methods, and benefits of the study (see Appendix A: Recruitment Letter to School Authorities). At the end of the email, the researcher left her contact details. One day later, the researcher received a phone call from the school authorities to seek an explanation about the researcher's background and more details about the research design and the research methods. The school authorities approved the study after the phone call and the researcher came to the school campus on the Saturday of that week (the Chinese weekend school operates every Saturday except holidays). The researcher met the school authorities first and the principal introduced the researcher to three teachers who were assigned to each of the three age groups examined in this study. Students in the younger two age groups (age 5-8 and age 9-11), were usually picked up by their parents after classes. During the

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pick-up time, the researcher introduced the study to parents (see Appendix B: The Verbal Content of Talking with Parents) and distributed the consent letter (see Appendix C: Participants Informed Consent Letter) to those who were interested. The consent letter included a detailed explanation of the purpose of the study, study procedures, voluntary participation, potential risks and benefits, and compensation and confidentiality. The parents read and signed the consent letter and returned it to the researcher if they and their children decided to participate. The researcher then contacted them by telephone or email in order to schedule the interviews in the following week. Data collection from the first two age groups took almost two weeks. Students in the third age group (age 12-15), traveled to and from the school by themselves. It was difficult to meet their parents on the school campus. Therefore, the researcher explained the study and distributed the consent letter to students, then asked the students to discuss their participation with their parents and to bring back the signed consent letter if both parent and student decided to participate in the study. The researcher also asked verbal assent (see Appendix D: Verbal Assent Protocol for Children) from the children prior to the interview.

In total, the researcher received five consent letters from the first age group, six consent letters from the second age group, and four consent letters from the third age group. Four participants in each group were selected according to the sequence in which they returned the consent letters. All the children were from Chinese immigrant families. They were born in Canada, or arrived in Canada before reaching two years old. Finally, their parents were both Chinese L1 speakers.

Table 3. 1

Participant Information

Name	Age	Parents participating	Birthplace
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	(pseudonym)		in the study	
Age group	Charlotte	6	Mother	Canada
5-8	Judy	6	Mother	Canada
	Amy	7	Mother	Canada
	Zoe	8	Father	Canada
Age group	Michael	9	Mother	China; moved to
9-11				Canada before age 2
	Joy	10	Mother	Canada
	Alex	11	Mother	Canada
	Tom	11	Mother	United States; moved
				to Canada before age 2
Age group	Jessie	13	Mother	China; moved to
12-15				Canada before age 2
	Fiona	14	Mother	Canada
	David	15	Father	China; moved to
				Canada before age 2
	Hannah	15	Mother	China; moved to
				Canada before age 2

3.3 Data Collection Methods

3.3.1 Interview.

The participating children and their parents who signed the consent letter were contacted by phone to arrange the date and place of the interview. In order to avoid potential family discord caused by different opinions or negative attitudes from the children towards their family heritage

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language, the parent and the child were interviewed separately, and they were informed that the conversation would be kept confidential. The separate interviews raised some difficulties when the researcher interview the younger children in the first age group, especially some children who are introvert. The researcher have anticipated such situations, and that's why the researcher collected more consent letters than planned.

3.3.1.1 The timeline of the interviews.

After the consent letters were signed and submitted, the interview schedule was set up by phone with each participant and their parents from April 06th. From April 06-12, 2019, the semi-structured interviews for the first age group were carried out. In total, the researcher received five consent letters for the first age group and the first four to return their consent letters were chosen. During the process, the researcher found that one audio recording of a child was unusable because the participant only nodded or shook their head during the interview. The child was six years old and her mother gently explained the procedures of the interview, but she is still too shy to speak out her thoughts. Therefore, the researcher decided to discard the audio-recording and contacted a fifth participant to replace the interview.

Right after the interviews for the first age group were completed, the interviews for the second age group were carried out from April 14-19, 2019. Based on the fact that the Chinese weekend school operates every Saturday and the time to meet student's parents is limited, the researcher could only access one age group each time. That's the reason why the interviews for different age groups were arranged into different weeks. The researcher received a total of six consent letters from the 12-15 year-old group, but two potential participants were eliminated because they didn't meet the precondition of the study: one participant arrived Canada when he/she was five years old; another one was born in a mixed family (the mother speaks Chinese

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while the father is a francophone) rather than not an immigrant family. Therefore, the researcher contacted the remaining four participants and conducted the interviews.

The interviews for the parents of the oldest group were different in some ways. Because students in the third age group were mature enough to go to classes alone, it was difficult to get in touch with their parents. As a result, the researcher introduced the study to students and distributed the consent letters on April 13th. The students were asked to explain the study to their parents and to bring back the signed consent letters if they had decided to participate in the study. On April 20th, the researcher received four signed consent letters. Then the researcher contacted the parents of the four participants in order to arrange interviews in the following week. As, the parents were too busy to meet for face to face interviews. They were interviewed over the phone. So in the end, the researcher conducted face to face interviews with the children and phone interviews with the parents. All the four participants and their parents who signed the consent letters were interviewed during April 21-25, 2019.

3.3.1.2 The process of the interviews.

The semi-structured interviews aimed to elicit detailed explanations about parents' cognition, their affects and actions regarding HL maintenance. The researcher started with simple questions about their background information like how long they had been living in Canada, family members living in their house, their highest educational level, and how they rated their language proficiency in English and French. Then the researcher posed questions related to their cognition of heritage language, that is, Chinese. For example, "What do you know about HL maintenance? Have you decided to maintain your child's Chinese? What informed your decision? And have your beliefs toward HL maintenance changed over the years?" Afterward, the researcher went further to explore parents' feelings or affect in relation to Chinese heritage

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maintenance through questions like “What language goals do you have for your child? Have you ever considered not maintaining Chinese with your child? And do you think your beliefs and attitudes have affected your child’s attitudes?” etc. The last part of the interviews was the focus on parents’ decisions and actions taken to support their child’s maintenance of Chinese. For example, “Which kind of things have you done to maintain Chinese in your family? Do you have rules about speaking Chinese or other languages in your home? And do you have any plans to help children to maintain Chinese?”

The design of the children’s interview was similar to that of the parents’ interview. Before the start of the interview, the researcher sought verbal assent (see Appendix D) from the children. Then the interviews started with easily-answered questions like name, age, and how long the child had been studying Chinese formally. Afterwards, the participants were questioned regarding their cognition, affect and actions in relation to Chinese. The researcher posed questions such as: “Do you think Chinese is important in your life? Do you have language activities that you do together with your parents? Do you want to continue learning Chinese? And would you like to find a job which involves using Chinese in the future?” The average interview duration with children was 7 minutes and 51 seconds. The average interview duration with parents was 13 minutes and 19 seconds. All interviews were conducted in Chinese and were audio-recorded.

3.3.2 Data Analysis: Thematic Analysis.

In order to describe and interpret the data, thematic analysis was employed in this study. Thematic analysis is a process of encoding qualitative information (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 27) by identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Braun and Clarke (2006) have commented that thematic analysis is not limited to any existing theoretical

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framework, Flexibility is one of the benefits of thematic analysis.

Braun & Clarke (2006) provide a six-phase guide for conducting thematic analysis, which includes: becoming familiar with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining themes, and write-up. Within two days data collection was finished, the researcher transcribed the recorded interviews within two days after data collection, during which process the researcher gradually became familiarized with the entire data. After reading and re-reading the transcripts in this study, the researcher developed three codes for sorting and interpreting the descriptive data. The initial three codes were developed deductively, and were based on the research questions themselves. In order to have a comprehensive perception of parents' and children's attitudes towards heritage language maintenance, referring to Colin Baker's *Attitudes and Language* (1992), the researcher broke the term attitude down into three aspects: *cognition*, *affect*, and *actions*. Thoughts and beliefs related to heritage language maintenance, like a stated belief in the importance of continuity of the heritage language, its value in the transmission of Chinese culture (Baker, 1992, p.13), were placed under the *cognition* code. The *affect* code concerns feelings towards heritage language maintenance. In this code, a feeling may concern love or hate of the language, a passion for Chinese literature and history, or worries or anxiety about learning a minority language (Baker, 1992, p.13). After that, the *actions* code included a readiness for action which is a behavioral intention or plan of action under defined contexts and circumstances (Baker, 1992, p.14). For example, a participant with a favorable attitude to Chinese might state they would continue to learn Chinese or they hope their younger siblings or children will learn Chinese.

Coding is an important process in that it could help to reveal themes which can represent the findings of the study (Stake, 2010, p. 92). When the coding process finished, the researcher

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read the coded transcripts carefully and tried to identify themes under each coding category. As Maguire and Delahut (2017) suggested, a theme is a pattern that captures something significant or interesting about the data and research question. Besides, it is essential for the themes not to overlap too much in order to interpret the data accurately (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Therefore, by identifying the shared common ideas among parents, or the children in the three age groups, the researcher noted four emerging themes under the coding categories: learning Chinese is important, placing greater importance on speaking and listening skills, responsibility handed to children over time, and preference for school support. After that, defining the themes was the final refinement of the themes and “the aim is to identify the essence of what each theme is about” (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

This chapter presented the research questions, the recruitment of participants, and the procedures of data collection. In the next chapter, the results of the study will be presented according to the four themes.

Chapter 4: Results

This chapter presents the results of the thematic analysis of the parent and child interviews. Their attitudes toward heritage language maintenance will be presented from two separate perspectives: the parents and children. The analysis produced four themes regarding their attitudes towards heritage language maintenance. Before the presentation of the four themes, the *Home Language Use* section introduces some noticeable points about the participants' background information. The three points collected from the interviews show the general language environment in the 12 participating families, like parents' self-rated language proficiency, home language, and knowledge of heritage language maintenance. After the *Home Language Use* part, the four themes regarding *Attitudes towards Heritage Language Maintenance* will be presented from both the parents' perspective and the children's perspective. The first theme, *Learning Chinese is important*, looks at parents' positive attitudes towards Chinese learning and their reasons for supporting Chinese language development, as well as the development of children's beliefs regarding heritage language maintenance as they grow older. The second theme, *Placing greater importance on speaking and listening skills*, investigates the parents' different expectations for their child's development of the four skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) in Chinese, and the children's different attitudes toward the four skills. The third theme, *Responsibility handed to children over time*, analyzes the process of parents' changing role towards their children's Chinese education and the growth of the children's autonomy of their Chinese learning. The fourth theme, *Preference for school support*, explores the reason why the parents decided to enroll their children in the Chinese weekend school instead of teaching their children themselves at home and why the children prefer the Chinese weekend school for their Chinese learning. All names used in the excerpts of the interviews are

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pseudonyms. The research questions of the study were:

1. What are Chinese immigrant parents' attitudes towards Chinese heritage language maintenance?
2. What are Chinese immigrant children's attitudes towards Chinese heritage language maintenance?
3. Do children show different patterns of attitudes towards Chinese heritage language maintenance depending on their age group?

4.1 Home Language Use

Before the introduction of the four themes, some noticeable points about participants' background will be presented to make the later parts more understandable. In this study, semi-structured interviews were employed to collect data, and the interviews begin with questions targeting the language and education background of the participants as well as family language use.

The first point is parents' self-rated proficiency levels in English, French, and Chinese. The parents were asked to rate their proficiency levels between one and seven, with one representing the lowest proficiency level and seven representing the highest possible proficiency level.. It can be seen from the table that the parents rated themselves as being less proficient in English and French than in Chinese, and they reported that Chinese is the lingua franca at home too.

Table 4. 1

Parents' Average Self-rated Proficiency Levels in English and French

	English	French	Chinese
The first group (Age 5 - 8)	4.00	3.50	7.00

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The second group (Age 9 - 11)	5.25	2.25	7.00
The third group (Age 12 - 15)	4.25	3.25	7.00

Even though the parents stated that Chinese is their home language, in their interviews, the children often stated that they also used English or French with their siblings. Outside the home, French became the first choice for the children to communicate with friends. One point mentioned here is that in all the 12 families, both the parent and the child stated that they have no specific language rules at home.

Table 4. 2

The Children's Language Choices with Different Partners

Name	With parents and grandparents	With siblings	With friends who can speak Chinese
Ashley	Chinese	Chinese & French (Half and half)	French
Amy	Chinese	No siblings	Chinese & French
Charlotte	Chinese	Chinese most of the time	Chinese & French
Zoe	Chinese	Chinese most of the time	English
Eric	Chinese	Chinese most of the time (Sister speaks English)	French
Michael	Chinese	No siblings	French
Joy	Chinese	Chinese & French (Half and half)	French
Alex	Chinese	More French than Chinese	French
David	Chinese	Chinese	French

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Hannah	Chinese	Chinese & French	
		(Half and half)	
Jessie	Chinese	French & English	French
Fiona	Chinese	More French	Chinese & French

The last point is about the parent's knowledge about heritage language maintenance.

Across the 12 parents, level of education varied from undergraduate degree to PHD. Although the parents have received a good education, they reported limited knowledge about heritage language maintenance. All parents reported that they rarely hear of the terminology “heritage language maintenance”. For example, David's mother said, “我没听说过，但是我想啊，应该就是说要保留自己的语言和文化。[I haven't heard of it (heritage language maintenance), but I think it means that we should keep our own language and culture]¹” From the data, most parents in this study were not familiar with the concept - heritage language maintenance, but they figured out the general idea of this concept from the literal meaning. Moreover, no one of the 12 parents had received any training or seminar about heritage language maintenance, like “what's a heritage language?” and how to maintain the heritage language of their children.

4.2 Attitudes toward Heritage Language Maintenance

4.2.1 Learning Chinese is important.

4.2.1.1 Parents believe in the importance of heritage language maintenance.

Through the interviews with parents and children, an attitude shared by all of them is that learning Chinese is important. Considering that all parents had chosen to enroll their children in a Chinese heritage language school, it is not surprising that they consistently emphasized the importance of Chinese language maintenance. In the interviews with parents, all participating

¹ All translations from Chinese are by the author.

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parents reported that it was important for their child to learn Chinese. For example, Tom's mother said, “这个太重要了，就是一定要学，这是当今世界的大势所趋啊。[(Chinese) is so important, and the children have to learn it. It [learning Chinese] is an irresistible trend all around the world nowadays.]” Ashley's mother said, “汉语对我们来说很重要，她是必须要学的。[Chinese is very important for us, and that is why we think that she has to learn Chinese all the time.]” When the researcher asked the question, “Have you decided to maintain Chinese with your child?”, nine out of the 12 parents stated that their child had to learn Chinese, two parents stated that they insist on asking him/her to (learn Chinese), like Charlotte's mother, who said “说实话，我从骨子里头我就不想放弃中文，所以我都会一直坚持让她学的。[To be honest, I don't want to give up Chinese from the heart...I will insist on asking her to learn Chinese.]” One parent, Zoe's father, said, “咱们国家的语言还是要学的，不学是不对的。[We should learn the language of our home country, and it's wrong to give up it.]” Besides, all parents gave negative responses to the question, “Have you ever considered not maintaining Chinese with your child?” The responses revealed that all the parents in this study believed that their children should learn their heritage language. Thus, an obvious attitude reflected by parents is that they believed in the importance of heritage language maintenance.

Sharing the same attitude, the parents gave different reasons or considerations to explain why they had such attitudes. In general terms, the parents believed in the importance of Chinese for four reasons: cultural identity, communication with family members, more opportunities in the future, and their plans to return to China.

Cultural identity: Cultural identity was the core reason why the parents believed in the importance of heritage language maintenance. Even when participating parents had already become Canadian citizens or obtained their Permanent Resident Card, they still valued their

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cultural roots. The parents in this study thought that cultural identity and the heritage language complement one another. On one hand, they believed that learning Chinese was the basic requirement of their children's cultural identity. On the other hand, they hoped that learning Chinese could reinforce their children's cultural identity.

From the viewpoint that learning Chinese is necessary for the development of a Chinese cultural identity, the parents believed that the Chinese language is an important symbol of Chinese culture. As Chinese descendants, learning Chinese is the basic requirement for the children. As Fiona's mother said, “我们是中国人，必须要讲汉语啊，还有汉语所代表的文化啊。我们觉得说汉语是一种本能，我们本身就应该说好这个语言。[We are Chinese, thus we have to be able to speak Chinese...and the culture is represented by the Chinese language. I believe that it's an inherent ability (to speak Chinese)...we need to speak Chinese well.]” In the interviews, seven parents identified themselves and their children as Chinese, and three parents stated that their child's mother tongue was Chinese. For instance, Ashley's mother said, “因为咱们都是中国人啊，母语也都是中文嘛。[Because we are Chinese and our mother tongue is Chinese.]” Even though the children had been born in Canada, their parents saw them as being Chinese. For example, Michael's mother said, “我的观点啊，就是不管我们到哪个国家生活，但我们毕竟是华人。[It doesn't matter in which country we live, from the root, we are Chinese.]”

From the viewpoint that learning Chinese reinforces cultural identity, the parents believed that learning Chinese would provide the tools for their children to experience Chinese culture through Chinese literature and history. For example, Tom's mother said, “啊我觉得他是个中国人，而且因为语言代表这个文化，我不希望他把这个文化丢掉。[I think that he is Chinese. For the culture, I hope that he can maintain the culture behind the Chinese language.]” They

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believed that the Chinese language is the key to open the door to Chinese culture. The parents hoped that the children would have a deeper understanding of their cultural identity and Chinese language by learning their heritage language, reading Chinese literature and know about Chinese traditions. Some other parents also stated sentiments like:

作为一个母语，是一定要学的，任何人都要学自己的母语。而且语言跟文化是联系的，我希望 Zoe 能有机会去感受中国文化的博大精深，那语言肯定是第一步要做的，所以我们要求她要学汉语。[As our mother tongue, we have to learn it. Besides, language and culture are interrelated. I really hope that Zoe will have opportunities to experience the priceless Chinese culture, and language is the first and the most important step. Thus, we asked her to learn Chinese.]
- Zoe's father

Effective communication: A second reason that parents gave why they believed in the importance of heritage language maintenance was the need for communication within family members. As mentioned above, the parent rated themselves as being less proficient in English and French than in Chinese. At the same time, they emphasized the significant of effective communication between two or three generations. Therefore, their children needed to learn Chinese to bridge the communication gap.

因为我们家长的英语法语不好，但是小孩的英文法文越来越好，我不想就是我到时候要很被动的用英法语去跟她沟通，我觉得我的沟通最好的理解还是中文，所以我希望她能学中文。[Because our English and French are not very good and the children speak the two languages more and more, we don't want to passively use the language which we are not skilled in to communicate with our children. Therefore, we ask Charlotte to learn Chinese.]
- Charlotte's mother

Heritage language as benefit: More opportunities in the future is also a reason why the parents insist on asking their children to learn Chinese. By nature, the capability in a language is a skill which will open up more opportunities to individuals. As Ashley's mother said, “以后多一门语言就多一条路，就会多一些机会。[One more language will bring more opportunities in the future.]” And with the rapid development of China, the parents also believe that speaking

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Chinese will become an advantage for their children in the future job market. For example, Tom's mother said, “我也是想中文算是多一门技能，因为中国现在这么发达。[Speaking Chinese is a skill or an advantage because China is developing very well.]” And Michael's mother also said, “还有就是我们国家现在发展的那么快，和世界联系越来越紧密，这么多人在说汉语，我们肯定要学好她。[Our country (China) is developing very quickly, and it is closely tied to other nations... more and more people learning and speaking Chinese. We have to learn the Chinese well.]”

Besides, some parents mentioned that they intend to go back to China for their child's education or career. One parent, Hannah's mother, stated that she planned to send her daughter back to China to attend university. She said, “我们带她回去学的，就是在暑假里去上汉语课，她以前也回国学过好几次，我们也想过让她回中国上高中或者上大学。[We have brought her back to China during summer vacation and she attended the Chinese learning classes there. We have the idea that she can come back to China for senior high school or university.]” Some parents also stated that they hoped their child would find a job in China due to the high-speed development of the economy there. For example, David's father said, “我是希望他将来能回国去找个工作，去发展，毕竟你看中国现在发展这么快，年轻人有这么多机会去做自己的事业。[I hope that he (David) can go back to China and develop his career there, because...you know...China is growing fast and the young people have more space to perform.]”

4.2.1.2 Children's beliefs evolve over time.

For the children, they seemed to all believe that learning Chinese was important, though the middle age group liked it less than the other two groups. The examination of children's general attitudes toward heritage language maintenance revealed that, along with the

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development of their Chinese learning, the children's beliefs evolved over time. Compare to the first age group (age 5-8), the third age group (age 12-15) seemed to be more conscious of the importance of the heritage language. In other words, they had a deeper understanding and serious realization of questions like "what is my heritage language and why should I maintain it?".

The first age group stated in the interview that they liked the Chinese language and they needed to learn Chinese. However, they didn't give specific reasons to explain these statements. When the question "*Do you think Chinese is important in your life?*" was posed, all four children in this group answered "yes". But for the following question "*Why do you think so?*" two of them answered "I don't know" and the other two children gave answers which reflected others' beliefs. For example, Charlotte said, "因为妈妈说我要好好学汉语。 [Because mama said that I should learn Chinese.]" And Amy who is seven years old also said, "因为我是个中国人。 [Because I am a Chinese.]" Based on this, it's difficult to see if the children in the first age group have internalized beliefs about heritage language maintenance and its importance, or if they are simply stating the beliefs handed to them by external sources such as their parents. Differently, the children in the second age group (age 9-11) explained their attitudes towards learning Chinese. All four children in this age group believed that Chinese was important in their life, and they gave practical, concrete reasons or personal opinions to explain that belief. For instance, Tom said, "我将来长大后也可能回中国。 [I may go back to China when I grow up.]" Joy said, "因为我在家里要用汉语。 [Because I need to use Chinese at home.]" And Alex stated, "我觉得吧, 听汉语和说汉语是挺重要的...汉语就像一门技术, 会说就行了, 没必要学的非常好。 [The ability to speak and listen Chinese are important...the Chinese language is a kind of skill, and that is to say, I should be able to use it, but it doesn't have to be professional.]" It's easy to see that the children in the second age group formed ideas regarding heritage language

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maintenance based on their actual situation. Similarly, the children in the third age group, from a more comprehensive perspective, stated their ideas about heritage language maintenance. The older children, such as Fiona and Hannah, have specific ideas about how they will use the Chinese language:

汉语对于我跟我爸妈的交流肯定是必须的，但是我还是会有时候法语和英语跟我妹妹讲话。我将来可能会回中国去上大学。但是说实话，上汉语课其实就是一种习惯。反正怎么说呢，多一门语言多一个选择吧。(Chinese) is necessary for communication with my parents. But when I talk with my sister, we still mix some French or English. I may go back to China for my undergraduate studies in the future. To be honest, attending the Chinese weekend school already became a habit. Whatever, learn one more language, have one more choice.]
- Fiona

汉语对我来说还是挺重要的，因为我出生在中国，我想要保持我的来处的语言。而且我将来还有可能回中国，因此汉语还是挺重要的，我还是想要保持我说汉语的能力。[(Chinese) is very important for me. Because I was born in China and I want to keep the language where I came from. Maybe I will go back to China in the future, thus the language Chinese is quite important. I want to keep my capacity to speak Chinese.]
- Hannah

According to the children's responses, the children's beliefs regarding heritage language maintenance went through a process of formation and development.

There are two things to be aware of in connection with the above results: first is the older children's more developed ability to articulate their thoughts, so the youngest children may have had the same feelings, but they didn't have the same ability to explain themselves at their age. Second is that the older children were in the Chinese weekend school by choice. Thus they may have been more reflective about the importance of heritage language maintenance. Therefore, we can see that children who have remained in the Chinese weekend school for a long time evolved their beliefs over time. When children started the Chinese weekend school, they may not have beliefs regarding heritage language maintenance. After a long period of learning and growing, they gradually evolved their beliefs and decided to continue their Chinese learning.

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Although the children seemed to believe that learning Chinese was important, they reported varied feelings towards heritage language maintenance. There are some minor differences within each group, but the third age group (12-15) showed the most passion regarding heritage language maintenance, while the second age group (9-11) showed some negative feelings towards Chinese learning. The youngest group showed interest in Chinese learning and they have fun learning primary knowledge like some simple Chinese songs and poems.

Through the interviews with the first age group, it was found that the children's attitudes toward the heritage language were affected by some objective factors like their dependence on Chinese and the less learning burden of the initial stage of Chinese learning. For the first factors, some children reported that they have problem understanding their teachers' instructions, like Charlotte, who said, “因为我能听得懂中文，我有时候在幼儿园听不太懂法语。 [Because I understand Chinese, but sometimes I don't understand what they said in kindergarten. (Charlotte was enrolled in a French kindergarten and the teachers there use French most of the time.)]” The children still found English and French difficult, unlike Chinese school, thus they showed more interest and enthusiasm for Chinese learning and Chinese weekend school. For the second factor, at the initial stage of Chinese learning, the children just repeated and imitated some simple Chinese songs and poems after their teachers. Due to the low-demand tasks, the children felt relaxed in their Chinese classes and they showed more openness to the Chinese language. As Ashley's mother reflected, “她上的还没接触到拼音什么的，只是幼儿汉语，学一些儿歌啊什么的，那个拼音还没开始。她可能 9 月份才开始正式学，目前为止她倒是挺好的。 [What she is learning (for Chinese) nowadays is very simple. She is in the primary stage...she just learned some children's songs in Chinese. The learning of pinyin (pinyin is the romanization

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of the Chinese characters based on their pronunciation) has not yet started, so she is well (for learning Chinese) up to now.]” In general, the children in the first age group accepted the arrangement regarding Chinese learning from parents and teachers in the Chinese weekend school and did not rebel against their parents or teachers.

Interestingly, the second group reported the most negative feelings toward Chinese learning. For example, Alex said, “不太想学汉语，太难了，我也不喜欢汉语学校，汉语太难学了。 [I am not eager to continue to learn Chinese. It’s too difficult. And I don’t like the Chinese weekend school...Chinese is too difficult.]” According to the curriculum design of the Chinese weekend school, the children begin to learn Chinese character writing at this stage. That was the main reason mentioned by the children for disliking learning Chinese; they didn’t enjoy learning to write. Joy’s mother mentioned the resentment caused by writing Chinese, “嗯如果你逼着他写作业之类的，他挺反感的，他不喜欢写汉字。 [If you push him to learn Chinese, like doing Chinese homework, he frowned at it. He doesn’t like writing Chinese especially.]” The children in this age group also showed a kind of antagonistic emotion to parents’ requirements of learning Chinese. The children’s antagonistic emotion were also reflected by parents’ description:

我们做家长的当然是希望他能坚持学汉语，但是我们也强迫不了他。我越是要求他，他就越是不愿意学。我们能做的也只是去启发他的兴趣，希望能激发他的兴趣。 [Of course, I hope that he can insist on learning Chinese, but we parents cannot force him to do so. The most I push, the more he resists. Therefore, what I can do is to enlighten and encourage him gradually. I hope that I can spark his interest in Chinese.]
- *Michael’s mother*

The third age group reported the most passion for heritage language maintenance. Their passion was manifested in two ways: firstly, they took an active part in heritage language maintenance activities like Chinese weekend school and summer camps in China. As stated

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earlier, parents in this age group tended to leave the decision to study Chinese up to their children. The children in this age group had therefore actively chosen to continue studying Chinese. Hannah's mother mentioned her Chinese learning in China, and she said, “她曾经回中国很多次就是为了学汉语。当她在国内的时候，她不仅学汉语，还练书法。[She went back to China to learn Chinese many times. When she was in China, she not only learned Chinese, but also practiced calligraphy.]” David's mother also gave an example of David's summer camps in China.

后来他参加寻根之旅，去北京和上海参加夏令营。回来之后呢，可能这个事情就给耿培严很大的激励和鼓舞，他就自己主动说要学汉语，然后我们也很高兴，可能是在国内的经历鼓舞了他。[He (David) participated in the trip to search for his roots (ancestors), then he came to the summer camps in Beijing and Shanghai. When he came back, he actively proposed that he wanted to learn Chinese. We (parents) think that it's the journey in China that gave him great inspiration and motivation about the language. Of course, we are happy to see that.]

- *David's mother*

Secondly, the children expanded their interest in the heritage language maintenance from just learning the language to learning about Chinese culture and history. Some children mentioned their varied activities related to Chinese learning. For example, Hannah said, “我有时候看一些中文的电视，而且我也读中文的书。[I watched some TV plays in Chinese, and I also read some books in Chinese.]” And Jessie described her Chinese language activities as well.

我挺喜欢读中文的历史书，因为这些历史故事很有意思，尤其是那些古代中国的故事。我爸妈也经常给我买中文的书。开始的时候我不能全部读懂，但是慢慢的我学汉语就好很多了。[I like reading history books in Chinese because I think they are interesting, especially something about ancient China. My parents bought many books for me. I cannot understand the stories at the beginning, but gradually I can read those books with the learning of Chinese.]

- *Jessie*

In conclusion, the children's passion for heritage language maintenance underwent ups and downs. In the initial stage of Chinese learning, the feeling of freshness and the light-hearted

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learning content make a favorable environment for the children to start their Chinese learning. Thus, the children in this situation (the first age group) usually have positive attitudes. However, as the difficulty and the learning demands increase, for the children in the second age group, negative feelings appeared and they showed resistance to Chinese learning and their parents' expectations. At this turning point, the difficulty of learning writing Chinese was an important reason. The children in the third age group reported the most passion for heritage language maintenance. They stated that they liked the Chinese language and they took actions to promote their own Chinese learning. One thing to notice here is that all child participants were recruited from a Chinese weekend school, therefore the children in the third age group are those who insisted on heritage language maintenance. We can assume that, by this point, children who did not like Chinese weekend school or who were not interested in Chinese language maintenance would have decided to drop out of the school.

4.2.2 Placing greater importance on speaking and listening skills.

In terms of the heritage language itself, it was found that participating parents and children had different attitudes towards the four skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing). Especially, both the parents and the children placed greater importance on speaking and listening skills. In the interviews with the parents, their attitudes were indicated by their higher expectations for their child's Chinese speaking and listening skills than for their reading and writing skills. Parents were asked to rate their language goals for their children on a scale of one to seven, with one representing the lowest proficiency level and seven representing the highest possible proficiency level. The mean values of the four skills were calculated in each group.

Table 4. 3

Parent's Expectations for Children's Proficiency Levels in the Chinese Language

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Group \ Means	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
Age group 5-8	5.75	5.75	4.25	4.00
Age group 9-11	6.00	5.75	4.75	3.75
Age group 12-15	6.75	6.75	6.25	6.25

From the horizontal comparison, it can be seen that the mean values of parents' expectations for their child's speaking and listening skill are higher than for their reading and writing skills. That is, the parents place greater importance on their child's development of listening and speaking skills of Chinese. Parents explained the difference in attitudes toward the four skills in two ways. The first thing they mentioned was the limited use of writing and reading skills in their child's everyday life. The 12 children were enrolled in French or English schools; therefore, they seldom wrote or read in Chinese except when they did homework for the Chinese weekend school. As Tom's mother said, “因为毕竟这里没有国内那个环境，平时他也很忙，要打冰球，要学钢琴，他还有很多其他的活动。然后他又英文作业，法语作业什么的，所以他也是精力有限。[Because there is no language environment like in China...and he is very occupied by all kinds of activities like hockey, piano and so on. Therefore, he has limited energy to handle everything.]” Some other parents stated similar concerns:

需要的话要尽量好，但是没有个环境她也沒辦法太好。写她有时候不太好，这没办法，她没有环境就不需要。[If necessary, I hope that she can learn Chinese as well as possible. But it's impractical to be the best due to the lack of language environment. For example, she is not good at writing...it's reasonable...she doesn't need the writing skill because she rarely uses it.]

- Zoe's father

The parents also mentioned the difficulty of writing and reading Chinese characters. Writing Chinese characters, and especially knowing how to follow the sequence of the strokes that make up Chinese characters, is different from writing alphabetic languages like French or

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English. In China, for the children who enroll in the general public school, they have around 8 hours' Chinese classes a week. When they finish 590 hours' Chinese classes (by the end of the second grade), they were required to be able to write Chinese characters. Therefore, writing Chinese is quite a challenge for the immigrant children who only have classes during weekend. All the participating parents were educated in China and they have experienced the learning process for Chinese characters. Based on their personal experiences and their children's learning environment, they didn't think writing Chinese very well is possible for their child. Like Charlotte's mother said, “现在她能认一些字，写我就不要求那么多，因为毕竟汉语还是比较难写的。[Now, she can read some Chinese characters...I don't ask so much about the writing skill. To be honest, the Chinese language is quite difficult to write.]” Joy's mother also said, “因为本来中文就是一门很难的语言，更别说学写汉语了。[Because Chinese is a very difficult language, let alone the challenge in writing Chinese characters.]”

Even though the parents thought that the actual language environment in Montreal was not favorable for the development of their children's Chinese reading and writing skills, one point agreed on by them was that they value the multilingual environment in Montreal. Montreal is a bilingual city where French and English are both majority languages. In this context, the Chinese immigrant children have to be exposed to three languages: French, English, and Chinese. Given the actual context, surprisingly, no parent responded that this multilingual environment was a burden for their children. Instead, parents believed that it was a valued opportunity for their children to develop three languages at the same time. For example, Fiona's mother was proud because her daughter is trilingual, and she said, “本身小孩她在成长过程中就可以学习很多种语言，只是我们时间，精力和金钱方面有限，所以她说三个语言我们就很满意了。[In fact, children can learn many different languages during their growth. Because our time,

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energy and money are limited, we (parents) are satisfied that she can speak three languages.]”

Zoe’s father also valued the multilingual environment in Montreal a great deal:

我从来不担心多语环境是一种负担。你会越多的语言，你就会变得更好。当她会讲英文后，她就是发现英语里比汉语好的那些，然后她就会学那些好的东西。我们都知道，语言就是有好的地方，也有不好的地方。这样她就会吸取她会的语言里的那些好的东西。这对她来说是无价的。[I’m not worried about (multilingualism being a burden for the child). The more languages you learn, the better you will get. When she (Zoe) can speak English and Chinese, she will compare the two languages. As we all know, each language has its good points and points which are not so good. Then she will choose the good points in each language she can speak. That’s priceless for her growth.]
- *Zoe’s father*

Especially, in the interview, one parent shared her different experiences about raising immigrant-background children in the U.S.A. and Montreal. She believes that the multilingual environment in Montreal provided a more favorable condition for her children to become multilingual and thus the children will have additional ways to see and experience the world.

我们之前在美国生活，然后我看我所有的朋友，他们的孩子到后来都不说汉语了，因为他们懂英文，孩子回来说英文他们就听得懂，哪怕他们用中文回答，然后孩子就持续的说英文说下去。有时候孩子们在美国也觉得说中文不舒服。美国不像这儿，大家都说自己的语言，然后慢慢的孩子们的汉语就都退化了。[Because we used to live in the U.S.A., and I noticed that all my friends...their children don’t speak Chinese eventually. Because (my friends) understand English, their children can use English at home. Even though they speak Chinese, their children don’t, and the children keep speaking English. Sometimes the children feel uncomfortable speaking Chinese (in the U.S.A.)...it’s not like here, people here speak all kinds of languages. Gradually, their children’s Chinese degenerated and finally they are unable to speak Chinese.]
- *Tom’s mother*

Overall, within the four skills in the heritage language, the parents showed different attitudes due to the differences in practical use and the difficulty of the language itself. Although the actual language environment is not favorable for the development of Chinese writing and reading, the parents in this study value the multilingual environment in Montreal.

The children also presented different attitudes towards the four language skills. Instead of saying that the children placed greater importance on the two skills, it’s more accurate to say that

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the children in this study showed more enthusiasm for listening and speaking skills than reading and writing skills. Unsurprisingly, like what the parents mentioned, the difficulty of Chinese characters is still the main obstacle in the children's Chinese learning. As Alex said, “说和听很重要，读和写就没有那么重要，太难了...我妈有点强迫我写汉语。[The speaking and listening skills were important, and the reading and writing skills is not so important. It's too difficult...my mom is forcing me to learn Chinese writing.]” Besides, the children also mentioned that the limited usage of Chinese reading and writing skills is another reason why they didn't insist on practicing the two skills.

我会一些读和写，但是我忘的也很快，一段时间不用就不会了。主要是没什么用处，我平时也很少会写汉语。[I know some reading and writing skills, but soon I began to forget them, especially when I didn't use them for a while. The main problem is that the two skills were not useful, and I seldom write Chinese in my daily life.]
- David

All in all, both parents and children think that the Chinese speaking and listening skills deserved more attention than the reading and writing skills. The difficulty of Chinese characters and the low frequency of using reading and writing skills were the two main reasons leading to their unbalanced attitudes.

4.2.3 Responsibility handed to children over time.

As mentioned above, the parents believed in the importance of heritage language maintenance and had positive attitudes toward it. Parents of children in different age groups took different actions to support their children's Chinese learning. The patterns in the way that the parents of different age groups supported their children indicated that, over time, parents tended to hand over the responsibility for learning Chinese to their children.

The parents in the first age group participated the most actively in their children's heritage language maintenance. They offered classes at home for some basic knowledge about

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the heritage language. For example, parents taught their child the Pinyin phonetic system and the four tones in Chinese. They also engaged in activities such as telling Chinese stories to support their oral literacy development, playing with Chinese character flash cards, and even working on a Chinese textbook together. As Ashley's mother said, “一般我都会读一些简单的睡前故事啊之类的，我也教她一些简单的汉字还有读儿歌什么的。[Usually, I read some simple bedtime stories every night. I have also begun teaching her some simple characters and reading nursery rhymes with her.]” Some other parents also did similar activities:

我会从国内带一些读本比如说小学的教材。但是那些教材比这儿的教材难多了，因为中国的教材内容更多一些。不过很难要求她学所有的内容，我们也只能是尽量做。[I bought Chinese textbooks and use them at home, but the textbooks are much more difficult than the Chinese textbooks here. Because the textbooks in China have more content, it's difficult to ask her to learn all the things...we do as much as we can.]
- *Charlotte's mother*

我们也一起看中文的动画啊。我还买了一个读故事的机器人给她，因为有时候我们家长确实挺忙的，一天下来也很累。这个机器人就可以反复的读一个故事。当然我们也给她读，而且她非常喜欢和我们一起读故事。[We watching Chinese animated films together...We have bought a robot that reads Chinese stories to my daughter, because sometimes we parents were really tired after a whole day's work. The robot can read stories on a continuous loop. Of course, we also read Chinese stories to her in person, and she is very willing to read stories together with us.]
- *Amy's mother*

Compared to the first age group (5-8 years old), parents in the second age group (9-11 years old) reported that they were less involved in the children's Chinese learning. At this stage, the parents mainly provided support to children's Chinese learning at the Chinese weekend school and no longer provided additional, intentional home-based support for Chinese development. For example, they helped their children do their homework and answered their child's questions. As Tom's mother said, “我们做的其实还挺不够的，我们大人每天都忙，而且精力也有限。现在我们能做的就是检查他有没有做中文学校布置的作业。[What we do to promote his Chinese learning is not quite good...we adults are busy every day, and our energy

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is limited. Nowadays, what we do is to check his homework assigned by the Chinese weekend school.]” The parents in this age group mentioned that they engaged in parent-child language activities when the children were little, but those activities were gradually abandoned with age.

他天天晚上都要写中文作业。原来小的时候还给他讲讲中文故事，现在长大了，他也不要睡前故事了，所以就主要是辅导他写中文作业。[He needs to do Chinese homework every night. When he is little, I read Chinese stories to him. But now, he’s a lot bigger and he doesn’t need the bedtime stories. Therefore, we mainly focus on helping him to finish Chinese homework.]

- *Alex’s mother*

我知道有的家长对汉语挺重视的，但是我们没有，我们就是去佳华，回来之后就是写作业。有时候他有问题我们也会帮他解决问题，比如不知道词的意思啊，不知道为什么这样表达啊，不过我们现在做的是挺少的。[I know some parents put a lot of time and effort into developing their children’s Chinese learning, but we didn’t do it. We just send him to Jiahua (the Chinese weekend school) and ask him to finish the homework. Sometimes when he has questions like what’s the meaning of this word and why we say like this...we answer his questions and explain it...we are not doing much now.]

- *Joy’s mother*

The parents in the third age group (12-15 years old) reported engaging in even fewer heritage language support activities. They believed that their children were able to independently handle their studies at their age, and what they needed to do was provide help when the children asked for it. Like Fiona’s mother said, “我们本身就给她提供了一个汉语的环境，没有什么额外的活动。[We parents already provide a Chinese home language environment. We have no more extra activities for Chinese learning at present.]” Similar to the parents in the second age group, they also mentioned that they offered many supporting actions when the children were little. For example, Hannah’s mother said, “她小时候墙上挂的都是识字卡片，我还教她五笔，我自己教的，就用那个拆分字体。[When she was little, the things hanging on the wall were all Chinese character flash cards. I taught her the Five-Stroke method to read Chinese characters by myself. I taught her how to split the character by the Five-Stroke method.]” Some

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other parents also mentioned similar situation:

是的，他小时候我们有挺多汉语活动的，但是现在我们也都挺忙的，所以我们就停了一些汉语活动。现在我们就是把汉语学习交给他自己了。他现在也长大了，能自己安排自己的事儿了。我们家长也不能一直给他做决定。[Yes, we had a lot when he was little. But now we parents are quite busy, thus we stopped the Chinese activities. Now we hand the Chinese learning to him. He is mature enough to arrange his studies well. We parents cannot make decisions for him all the time.]
- *David's mother*

All in all, to varying degrees, the parents in this study supported their children's heritage language maintenance. As their children got older, however, the parents gradually retreated from the children's Chinese learning, and left more space for their children to develop their heritage language independently. In the end, support and decision-making for Chinese learning were handed over to the children.

Echoing the parents' attitudes that they handed Chinese support and decision-making to children gradually, the children took more responsibility for their Chinese schooling over time. In the interviews with the first and the second age group, the children stated that they were willing to go to the Chinese weekend school and they enjoyed the activities with their parents. They presented personal attitudes and feelings about Chinese learning, but they didn't mention any activities proposed or arranged by themselves. The parents and the school still played a leading role in the children's Chinese learning, and the children followed the instructions of their parents and the teachers.

In contrast, the children in the third age group showed more individual ideas about their Chinese learning. Of vital importance was that they had personal plans about learning Chinese. They were consciously trying to continue learning Chinese, and they had explicit plans to continue learning Chinese. Actually, the children in the third age group showed self-motivation of heritage language maintenance. As Fiona mentioned:

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会的，会把学校的汉语课程都上完。我还是觉得汉语是自己学的，其实中文学校就是作文方面，然后发音方面会有一些纠正。但是日常的积累还是要看自己。[Yes, I will continue to learn Chinese until the end of the curriculum. Actually, I think that learning Chinese is counting on myself. The Chinese weekend school can only have an auxiliary effect. For example, the composition and the pronunciation need instructions and corrections from the teachers. But for the day-to-day accumulation, it's up to ourselves.]

- *Fiona*

Another student also mentioned her plans for learning Chinese:

我会一直学汉语，要到能写论文才能停吧。事实上，我觉得我现在一些简单的字还可以。我也是会一直练习阅读，一直到我能读学术的东西。我有一个自己做的两年的时间表，就是为了学汉语。[I will continue to learn Chinese until I can write a paper in Chinese. In fact, I think that I am OK for the common characters. For the reading skills, I will keep practicing until I can read academic works. I have a timetable made by myself...it's for my Chinese learning which will last for two to three years.]

- *Hannah*

我小时候我爸妈经常给我讲睡前故事啊，我们一起看动画片。但是那都是我小时候。现在我主要是做汉语作业，而且他们也很少过问我的汉语。他们相信我能做好吧。[When I was little, my parents often gave me storytelling and we sometimes watched Chinese cartoons together. But those happened when I was a little girl. Now I focus on my homework and my parents seldom concern my Chinese learning. They believed in me that I can do it well.]

- *Jessie*

From the statements, it can be seen that the children in the third age group take more responsibility for learning Chinese than the first and the second age group. The parents gave enough space for the children to make decisions and arrange their Chinese learning. At the same time, the children took more responsibility and decisions over time. If we look at the parents and the children as a whole, their actions regarding Chinese learning are concurrent and coherent: when the parents took a step back, the children took the space to respond and to decide about their Chinese learning.

4.2.4 Preference for school support.

In terms of heritage language maintenance, Chinese school plays a significant role in

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immigrant background children's language learning. The parents' and children's attitudes toward the heritage language itself and the actual language environment were presented above. In addition, related to the heritage language maintenance, one more attitude shared by both parents and children in this study was their preference for school support. The parents and children gave their different reasons, but they consistently preferred to enroll in the Chinese weekend school for Chinese learning. For the parents, even though they spoke Chinese as their first language, they found it difficult to teach their children Chinese at home. First, the difficulty of conducting formal teaching at home over time is the main reason why parents seek support from the Chinese weekend school.

我在家也教中文，但是很难，像如作业啊，我们自己去布置就很难说必须得完成，孩子就觉得说啊这个可完成可不完成，那就不会那么坚持，上课还是不一样的，她被动的会写作业，就是比较正式一些。[I taught Chinese to my daughter at home before, but it's...impractical. For example, if I leave some homework about what we learned, the children didn't take it seriously and they think it's OK to ignore it. Then the Chinese teaching cannot continue at home. The Chinese weekend school is different. The children think that the homework assigned by teachers is their responsibility, thus they pay attention to the homework and Chinese learning.]

- *Charlotte's mother*

我尝试在家教过他，我觉得我不能坚持，我可能方法也不是太好，我会发脾气，所以就来学校交给老师了。[I tried to teach Chinese at home, but I think that I cannot insist on it. On one hand, I am not good at the teaching skills...or maybe my methods were wrong. I always became angry during the teaching process. Whatever, we finally decided to hand the Chinese teaching over to the teachers.]

- *Tom's mother*

我其实去佳华之前我有这样的过程，但是呢，总归是没有什么仪式感，感觉好像没有学校里的那种仪式感的话，对小孩来说也不是那么正规，比如说在学校里老师都在讲台前面，但是在家里就不是，孩子也不认真对待，所以后来才会想到把他送到学校去。没有师生那种正式的关系，就总是感觉不对头。[Actually, I had the same process (teaching Chinese at home) before we sent him to the Chinese weekend school. But it's difficult to have the...um...the sense of ceremony. For example, in school, the teacher stands in front of the children and they have a classroom. At home, things are different. Because of the lack of the sense of ceremony, the children didn't take the Chinese teaching seriously, and it's informal for the children. Therefore, we decided to

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send him to the Chinese weekend school. Without the formal relationship between the teacher and the students...it always feels like something is wrong.]

- *Michael's mother*

这是目前最好的方式，因为她平时要上学，只有周末才有时间去学中文。家庭里不适合做这种教学活动。[It (learning Chinese in the Chinese weekend school) is the best way nowadays. Because she has to go to school every weekday, and she only has time for Chinese learning at the weekend. Besides, home is not suitable for such teaching activities.]

- *Jessie's father*

Besides, some parents also mentioned the advantages of learning Chinese in the Chinese weekend school. Parents believe that the Chinese weekend school creates a favorable environment for their children to learn and practice Chinese. For example, some language activities provided by the school, like calligraphy competitions, give the children opportunities to experience Chinese culture. Hannah's mother mentioned the language environment and said, “中文学校有那个说中文的环境，而且也很便宜，所以就去了。[The Chinese weekend school provides the Chinese environment and the tuition fee is quite cheap. Therefore, Hannah enrolled in the school.]” Moreover, parents believe that the systematic curriculum design and the formal classroom classes in school are necessary for their children's heritage language maintenance. Like Ashley's mother said, “因为这种辅导班，毕竟都是中文老师，在国内也都做中文教育的，他们的教学会比较系统。我相信这里的老师。[Because in such tutorial classes, the teachers are professional and with experience. They (the teachers) were engaged in Chinese education before in China, and the school has a systematic curriculum. I trust the teachers there.]” Alex's mother also mentioned, “这个中文学校是个相对来说规模比较大的学校了，而且这里的课程设计也比较体系。[This Chinese weekend school is a relatively large-scale school, and the curriculum design is much more systematic.]”

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主要是为了学写和读，在家里她说和听都没什么问题。因为从小就在家里说中文，但是要说写的话，我觉得还是去学校系统教一下比较好[The main purposes were reading and writing. (Amy) has no problem with listening and speaking Chinese because she has used Chinese at home since childhood. But for writing, I believe that the (school's) system of teaching is beneficial and efficient.]

-Amy's mother

Some parents also mentioned that they were not patient enough or they had limited time to teach their children. Based on the fact that the participants were recruited from the Chinese weekend school, it is important to keep in mind that the parents had already enrolled their children in the school and were more likely to value the school's role in supporting their child's heritage language maintenance. Even so, they do provide important insight into their motivation for choosing to send their children to a Chinese weekend school.

Not only the parents but also the children in this study have preference for school support of Chinese learning. It's interesting that the children shared the same attitudes with their parents in this point. The children stated that they preferred to learn Chinese in school rather than at home. The reason most mentioned is that the children enjoyed the comfortable environment in the school. The comfortable environment not only refers to the Chinese learning environment, but also the bright environment created by peers or playmates. For example, Jessie said, “我喜欢中文学校，因为我这儿有很多朋友，而且也能学到一些东西，我还挺喜欢这儿的说中文的环境的。[I like the Chinese weekend school because I have lots of friends here. Besides, I can learn something about Chinese here. I really enjoy the Chinese-speaking environment here.]” Fiona also said, “我喜欢来中文学校因为我可以和同学说汉语，而且周末在家也很无聊，来这儿还可以聊聊天玩玩游戏。[I like going to the Chinese weekend school because I have more opportunities to speak Chinese with my classmates. Besides, it's boring to stay at home during the weekend, and here we can chitchat and play games together.]”

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Another reason mentioned by some children was the difficulty of learning Chinese with their parents. On the one hand, the parents were not professional teachers. One child recalled that his mother easily lost her patience and became angry. Another child stated that her parents could not clearly explain questions about Chinese, even though Chinese was their first language. Therefore, the children believed that learning Chinese at formal school or classes was more appropriate.

有过几次我们从中国运一些书过来，然后我们就读课文之类的，我妈妈就给我将课文，教生字啊，偏旁啊，拼音啊之类的，但是次数不多。我跟妈妈一起学习的时候总是走神。而且我们总是被各种乱七八糟的事情打断，所以我还是更喜欢在学校里学中文。[Sometimes we carried lots of books from China like the textbook and literary works, then I read those books. My mom explained in detail when I have questions. But that's not often. I am not so serious when I learn with my mom. And we are always interrupted by all kinds of trifles. Therefore, I prefer to attend the classes at the Chinese weekend school.]

- *Hannah*

This chapter presented the results under the four themes that emerged from the data analysis: learning Chinese is important, placing greater importance on speaking and listening skills, responsibility handed to children over time, and preference for school support. In the next chapter, the researcher will interpret the results and address the research questions.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate Chinese parents' and their children's attitudes toward heritage language maintenance, as well as the actions they have taken or plan to take to maintain the children's heritage language. The results of this study were presented in the previous chapter under the four themes that emerged from the analysis of the interview data. In this chapter, the researcher will interpret and discuss the findings of the study in order to answer the research questions. The first main research question focused on how the parents perceive Chinese language maintenance. This question included the sub-questions: what are parents' attitudes toward Chinese maintenance, how much importance do they place on developing and maintaining the four language skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) in Chinese, and what are their attitudes to the heritage language school. The second main research question explored children's attitudes towards heritage language maintenance. Lastly, the third main research question addressed whether the children showed different attitudes towards Chinese heritage language maintenance depending on their age group.

5.1 Parents' Attitudes

The first research question investigated how parents perceive heritage language maintenance. Analysis of the interview data revealed that parental attitudes could be grouped under three broad headings: the obligation or usefulness of knowing the heritage language, the four skills of the heritage language, and heritage language school. As reported in the previous chapter, the results showed that, generally, parents held positive attitudes toward heritage language maintenance. Specifically, they believed that learning Chinese was important for reasons like cultural identity, quality communication within family members, and benefits for the job market in the future. However, the parents placed greater emphasis on listening and speaking

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skills. They also believed that heritage language school played an important role in their children's Chinese learning due to their limited teaching skills of heritage language and limited energy. At the beginning of this study, the term 'attitude' was broken down into three aspects: cognition, affect, and actions (Baker, 1992). Based on this, in order to comprehensively answer the first research question, the parents' attitudes toward the heritage language maintenance are grouped into five categories: supportive attitudes toward heritage language maintenance, different perspectives on their supportive attitudes, actions taken to support Chinese maintenance, attitudes toward the heritage language school, and attitudes toward the four skills. The first two categories will combine parents' cognition and affect together to discuss their attitudes toward heritage language maintenance as a whole. The third categories will focus on the actions they practiced or will practice to maintain Chinese, while the fourth and the fifth categories will separately present parents' attitudes toward two topics related to heritage language maintenance.

5.1.1 Supportive attitudes toward heritage language maintenance.

The parents in this study reported that they believed in the importance of their children's Chinese learning. This is in line with other studies finding that most immigrant Chinese parents hold positive attitudes toward heritage language maintenance, and they support their children's Chinese learning. In North America, Lao's (2004) study surveyed 86 parents who enrolled their children in a Chinese-English bilingual preschool in San Francisco., and the study applied questionnaires to collect parents' attitudes toward bilingual education and their expectations for their children and the language environment at home. Through questionnaires, the researcher found that parents strongly support Chinese-English bilingual education. The major reasons for their attitudes were the practical advantages, positive effects on self-image, and development of skills enabling effective communication within the Chinese-speaking community. Those reasons

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were also reflected by the parents' interview in this study. When the parents discussing why they support their children's heritage language maintenance, they mentioned similar concerns such as more job opportunities, positive cultural identity, and communication with family members. In the same vein, Zhang and Slaughter-Defoe (2009) did a qualitative study to investigate attitudes toward heritage language maintenance among Chinese immigrant parents and their second-generation children. The researcher practiced participant observations in two Chinese local communities in Philadelphia and ethnographic interviews with 18 Chinese immigrant families in the communities. The results showed that Chinese parents in the United States value their heritage language and take positive actions to maintain it in the next generation. In Canada, when Li (2006) explored three Chinese-Canadian first and second graders' trilingual (Mandarin, Cantonese, and English) practices, the researcher found similar attitudes regarding heritage language maintenance. The three focal students and their families were from the Greater Vancouver area and the three children were in a grade 1 and 2 combined class in a multiethnic elementary school with 80 percent Chinese student population. By using a variety of ethnographic methods including direct observation, participant observation, interviews, and document collection, the researcher found that the parents emphasized the heritage language and expected their children to become multilingual. Similarly, the parents in this study value the heritage language and enroll their children to heritage language school in order to promote their children's heritage language learning.

5.1.2 Different perspectives on parents' supportive attitudes.

Regarding parent's attitudes toward the heritage language, another point that needs to be discussed is the source of their attitudes. In this study, the parents' supportive attitudes toward the heritage language maintenance were motivated by different reasons: some parents believed that

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Chinese language maintenance was indispensable to develop their children's cultural identity, while other parents thought that their child's knowledge of Chinese would guarantee effective communication with family members. Still other parents saw the potential economic capital that knowledge of Chinese might bring (e.g., career opportunities).

From the perspective of cultural identity, the parents in this study showed deep affection for their homeland, and they identified themselves and their children as Chinese or 'overseas' Chinese. In this, they are reminiscent of Redding (1990), who suggests that the majority of Chinese immigrants have not psychologically left China, or at least they have not left some ideal and perhaps romanticised notion of Chinese civilization. Zhang and Slaughter-Defoe (2009) also mentioned that when Chinese parents seek to transmit their ethnic identity to their children, they look to the heritage language to do it. The parents in this study bundled the Chinese language with Chinese cultural identity. The parents seemed to believe that the Chinese language is the prerequisite for developing a Chinese cultural identity. Similar opinions were also present in some other studies (Leung & Uchikoshi, 2012; Liao & Larke, 2008). Lee (2013) found a similar situation among Korean-speaking immigrant families in the USA. The parents in Lee's study hoped that their children would shape a positive ethnic identity through maintenance of the heritage language. In this study, the parents' affection for China and Chinese culture contribute to their supportive attitudes of heritage language maintenance.

Secondly, from the perspective of effective communication, the parents in this study reported that they were less proficient in English and French than in Chinese. Chinese was also the most frequently used language between the parents and their children. Zhang and Slaughter-Defoe (2009) indicated that heritage language loss among second-generation children hinders communication between parents and children in immigrant families and threatens family

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cohesion, especially when the older generation are not able to use English fluently (p. 85). Zhang (2010) gave specific examples to show that when immigrant Chinese parents communicate in English with their children, the communication does not go smoothly due to the parents' limited English proficiency. Yan (2013) suggests that parents support the heritage language maintenance for the sake of better communication in the family. In this study, parents' concerns about potential communicative estrangement between them and their children was a significant factor in shaping their attitudes toward their children's Chinese learning.

Thirdly, the potential practical and economic benefits of the heritage language in the future were important to the parents in this study. They believed that their children would benefit economically from their ability to speak Chinese. In the literature on heritage language maintenance, not only Chinese immigrant parents, but most East Asian immigrant parents promote their children's heritage language maintenance because they believe their children will have better future economic opportunities. For example, Kawaguchi (2014) practiced semi-structured interviews with eight principals of Japanese language schools in the Greater Vancouver area, and the interviews reflected that the Japanese immigrant parents emphasized the potential benefits of heritage language. Park and Sarkar (2007) used questionnaires and interviews to investigate nine Korean immigrant parents who had a child (or children) between the ages of six to eighteen in 2005. They found that the immigrant Korean parents also noticed the practical advantages of heritage language maintenance. For most immigrant parents from East Asia, including the parents in this study, speaking more languages would lead to more potential economic benefits, and their children would become more valuable in the future job market. Overall, the three perspectives regarding parents' supportive attitudes indicated in this study seem to corroborate Liu's (2008) study. Liu (2008) found that parents who held positive

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attitudes toward heritage language maintenance did so for three reasons: (a) the practical value of the heritage language, such as a better career in the future; (b) the development of an ethnic identity; and (c) increased cohesion within family (p. 42).

5.1.3 Actions taken to support Chinese maintenance.

As mentioned, the term ‘attitude’ was broken down into three aspects. Action is one of the components. Therefore, parents’ actions that they did or plan to do to promote their children’s heritage language maintenance were explored as well. Most parents in this study reported that they had made great efforts and taken many actions to help their children maintain the heritage language, especially when the children were younger. Some studies have documented that Chinese immigrant parents tend to proactively promote heritage language maintenance by adopting a Chinese-only policy in the home (Kung, 2013; Leung & Uchikoshi, 2012). In contrast with these studies, however, none of the parents in this study set language rules in the home, though Chinese was reported the most frequently used home language. In the same vein, Yan’s (2013) research showed that out of 16 Chinese speaking parents, 15 stated that they spoke Chinese most of the time at home with their children. In this study, the parents’ efforts to help their children maintain the heritage language was reflected in their creation of a Chinese speaking environment at home and by additionally organizing language-oriented activities such as telling bedtime stories and teaching their children Chinese themselves. Lü and Koda (2011) found that many Chinese immigrant parents teach their children Chinese at home and assign Chinese homework to their children. They also found that parents often support their children’s Chinese development by organizing family gatherings, providing daily TV exposure in Chinese, and reading with children in Chinese. Similar practices were found in Korean heritage language studies (Park & Sarkar, 2007).

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One additional piece of the puzzle that this study adds to the research literature is a comparison of parents' HL maintenance actions over time. Comparing the three age groups in this study, the researcher found that as their children grew older, the parents gradually became less active in participating in their children's heritage language maintenance. The parents in the first age group reported that they spent lots of time reading together or watching Chinese cartoons. Although parents with children in the second and the third age groups recalled many activities they did when their children were younger, they no longer engaged in such activities. Rather, the parents tended to increasingly hand over the responsibility for Chinese maintenance and related decision-making to their children as they grew older.

The parents in this study reported limited knowledge about heritage language maintenance, and no one of the 12 parents had attended any related training or seminars in how to support their children's bilingualism. Although all participating parents spoke Chinese as their first language, teaching Chinese seems to be a different story. When the children grow older and moved up the educational ladder, the complexity and workload of Chinese learning increased rapidly. With limited teaching skills and burdensome learning tasks, it was impractical for parents to handle teaching Chinese to their children by themselves. As Hong (2016) discussed, the age of children might affect parental involvement in their children's reading activities, and this also reflects the conflict between parents' limited teaching skills and children's increased learning requirements.

5.1.4 Attitudes toward the heritage language school.

Because the participants in this study were recruited from a Chinese heritage language school, all participating parents had already made the decision to enroll their children there, and they were pre-disposed to have positive attitudes towards the school. According to Liang

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(2018)'s review of 17 studies, sending children to a heritage language school or program is a prevalent practice among immigrant parents in order to maintain their children's heritage language. For example, Jeon (2008) found that Korean immigrant parents have such practices and Li (2006) found a similar phenomenon among Chinese immigrant parents. In addition to parents' limited ability to teach Chinese to their children, there were two more reasons given for their decision to send their children to the school. Firstly, although informal, daily accumulation of experiences with the heritage language is indispensable for heritage language maintenance (He, 2008, p. 2), the parents in this study still hoped the formal and systematic Chinese education offered once a week would give extra support to their children's heritage language maintenance. Other studies have uncovered this same motivation among other immigrant parents. For example, Zhang and Slaughter-Defoe's (2009) study mentioned that many Chinese parents favored Chinese heritage language school and anticipated that their children would be able to learn the heritage language systematically, formally, and consistently in the school. In other studies, not only Chinese immigrant parents, but a majority of Asian immigrant parents reported that they encouraged their children to attend heritage language schools because they considered formal heritage language education to be beneficial (Kawaguchi, 2014; Park, 2011). Parent's emphasis of formal heritage language education in school is consistent with the literature about Confucian Heritage Cultures which value the formal education. By practicing three empirical studies in the Hong Kong context, the researchers Lam, Ho and Wong (2002) indicated that parents were satisfied with the work of the schools and they had confidence in the schools.

Secondly, with busy schedules, the working parents didn't have enough time to provide their children with a systematic education in Chinese at home. For this reason, Brown (2011) found that some parents believed the best solution was to send their children to heritage language

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programs. It can be seen that the parents in this study believed in the importance of the formal and systematic heritage language education provided by the heritage language school.

Furthermore, they relied on the heritage language school to make up for their own absence in their children's heritage language maintenance.

5.1.5 Attitudes toward the four skills.

An interesting point to emerge from this study concerned parents' varying attitudes toward development of the four language skills in Chinese. By ranking their goals for their children's heritage language learning, the parents showed that they placed greater importance on speaking and listening skills. Previous studies have similarly indicated that most Asian immigrant parents are enthusiastic with regard to their children's oral proficiency in the heritage language (Li, 2006; Noro, 2009; Park, 2013). It's understandable that the parents would prioritize oral proficiency. Firstly, compared with the arduous effort required to develop Chinese writing skills, they could create a favorable Chinese-speaking environment at home with little effort. Secondly, oral proficiency carried a more immediate need in their daily lives. Their children needed it to communicate with them and other family members.

The de-emphasized literacy ability, especially the writing skill, was mainly caused by the difficulty of developing written Chinese literacy. As Zhang (2010) discussed, Chinese immigrant parents might perceive promoting literacy as a challenging task due to the linguistic characteristics of the Chinese language, such as different orthographic systems. As a result, the parents who tried to teach Chinese writing in person expressed contentment as long as their children could speak the heritage language, but they did not particularly expect their children to be literate. When Liao and Larke (2008) explored the reasons why parents chose Chinese heritage schools, they found that most parents expected their children to master conversational

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and reading skills but not writing. Moreover, the parents did not see an equivalent practical use for Chinese reading and writing skills.

5.2 Children's Attitudes

The second and the third research questions addressed the children's attitudes toward heritage language maintenance and tried to find patterns in children's attitudes across different age groups. The main findings were that the children in this study showed positive attitudes toward heritage language maintenance, and their beliefs regarding the importance of the heritage language evolved over time. At different ages, the children experienced different feelings towards learning Chinese that were related to their maturity and the learning burden posed by the fact that the curriculum also changed and became more demanding as they grew older. In fact, all participating children enjoyed a favorable heritage language environment at home, but heritage language school still played a considerable role in the development of their heritage language. In particular, some participating children mentioned that the heritage language school had helped to develop their Chinese literacy. Moreover, like their parents, the children had their own ideas about the four language skills in Chinese. This was particularly the case among participants in the oldest age group, who chose to attend the heritage language school without their parents' influence.

5.2.1 Attitudes toward heritage language maintenance.

Before beginning this part of the discussion, one thing to note is a peculiarity related to older children's enrolment at the school. Those students who remained in the program in the long term were the ones who had chosen to do so themselves. As noted above, their parents left this decision up to them. In other words, the older group of students were more likely to have a positive attitude towards the heritage language by virtue of self-selection. That being stated, all

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of the children in this study showed generally positive attitudes toward the heritage language except those in the second age group, but there were three findings worth further discussion here. Firstly, the children's belief in the importance of heritage language maintenance evolved over time. Compared to the first two age groups, the children in the third age group showed clear and specific beliefs regarding their heritage language maintenance. Different from the first age group who seemed to attend the school because they were told to, and different from the second age group who were struggling to go through the demands of learning to read and write in the heritage language, the third age group had found personal meaning for Chinese in their life.

Secondly, the children's parents played an indispensable role in the development of their children's positive attitudes toward the heritage language. Findings from many studies (Hinton, 1999; Luo & Wiseman, 2000; Mills, 2001) indicate that parents who explicitly display positive attitudes toward heritage language have a strong influence on the children's attitudes. As Liu (2008, p. 42) stated, the positive attitudes toward heritage language were "instilled in children via daily contact" and served to enhance their heritage language maintenance. In this study, the children in the first age group showed the most apparent evidence of having had positive attitudes instilled by their parents. The children generally presented positive attitudes toward the heritage language, but they also stated that it was their parents who told or asked them to learn Chinese and attend the Chinese weekend school. Luo and Wisemean (2000) also discussed that the parent-child cohesion was an important mediating factor in the relationship between the parent's language attitude and the children's ethnic language retention. Therefore, the children's positive attitudes, to a varied degree, were influenced by or transmitted from their parents. Even so, in the long run, it's the children who play the decisive role in determining their attitudes.

Thirdly, though the children usually showed positive attitudes toward the heritage

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language itself, they experienced different feelings toward learning it. In general, their feelings changed mainly caused by the increasing Chinese learning burden, especially the second age group who met the burden for the first time. Although the third age group also bore an additional learning burden, they feel positively enough about the language to stick with it. From the interview results of the three age groups, it can be found that the children in the first age group were the most passionate about learning Chinese. There are two reasons that account for their passion: one is less complex learning tasks. Zhang and Slaughter-Defoe (2009) found that younger children in their study were usually happy with learning the heritage language and they thought that learning Chinese was fun. In Chinese class during this period, they tend to play games and do interesting and entertaining activities. As the difficulties of learning Chinese increased, and the complex Chinese written system was introduced, the children's passion and interest in learning Chinese lessened. Similar conclusions also emerged from other studies (Liu, 2008; Zhang & Slaughter-Defoe, 2009). However, not all children's passion and interest go down all the time. In this study, the children in the third age group showed a different profile. Even though they reported that they experienced the same difficult period when they began to learn Chinese writing, they persisted, and earnestly proceeded to maintain the heritage language.

5.2.2 Attitudes toward the heritage language school.

The children generally reported positive attitudes toward the heritage language school, but they gave different explanations for their positive attitudes. Firstly, the children enjoyed meeting their peers in the heritage language school. Du (2007) also mentioned that many students found it was "fun" to gather with other Chinese people by attending the school (p. 157). The Chinese heritage language school gathered a great number of children and the school provided all kinds of cultural activities regarding Chinese learning, thus the children enjoyed the

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interesting and relaxing environment. Besides, certain children mentioned the Chinese-speaking environment created by the heritage language school. The Chinese heritage language school was considered by the students as an important context to “speak their heritage languages and experience Chinese culture” (Wu, 2011, p. 950). Moreover, the children in higher grades stated that they valued the support provided by the school regarding developing their Chinese literacy. The Chinese heritage language school is one of the few institutions where they have access to systematic teaching about Chinese writing. Therefore, the children in this study, for different reasons, showed positive attitudes toward the heritage language school.

Attitudes toward the four skills. In fact, the children did not show unanimous attitudes toward the four skills of their heritage language. Some children believed that the four skills were equally important, while others believed that listening and speaking were more important. The second age group expressed the most obvious distinction among the four skills, and they showed the most detestation of the writing skill. Again, the main influencing factor for their different attitudes were the difficulties they encountered at different learning levels. In this study, the children in the second age group were facing difficulties in learning Chinese writing. Some of these learners reported that speaking and listening skills were more important. For them, the main purpose of Chinese was for communicating with their parents and other family members, and they did not see the practical use of learning to read and write. However, the children in the third age group showed different ideas. They believed that all four skills were important for heritage language maintenance, and the heritage language school provided irreplaceable help for developing Chinese literacy. Although the children who insisted on heritage language maintenance made the effort to develop reading and writing skills, the results were unsatisfactory. As Zhang (2008, p. 93) found, the majority of immigrant children understood Chinese when

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spoken to and some could speak Chinese fluently, but most of them had “a low level of Chinese literacy” because they did not have adequate reading or writing skills in Chinese.

In order to answer the research questions, this chapter discussed the parents’ and children’s attitudes toward heritage language maintenance from different perspectives. In general, the parents held positive attitudes while the children presented divergences with moving up the educational ladder. The children shared some common points across the different age groups, but it’s not possible to say that the children showed patterns in their attitudes.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

This study examined parent's and children's attitudes toward heritage language maintenance and children's attitudes at different age groups. By applying semi-structured interviews with both the parents and the children, the researcher collected data and drew important results through thematic analysis. The results showed that parents in this study believe in the importance of heritage language maintenance, while the children's beliefs evolve over time. Besides, both the parents and children placing greater importance on speaking and listening skills, and they prefer the support from heritage language school. I hope that the results may contribute to the existing body of literature, particularly about Chinese immigrants' attitudes toward heritage language maintenance in Canada. However, this study still has some limitations which are important to note in order to have a more precise understanding of the results. At the same time, I hope that these limitations could offer inspiration for future research. Therefore, this chapter will introduce the present study's limitations, contributions, and suggestions for future research.

6.1 Limitation

In spite of the interesting findings in this study, there are two limitations to be noted for a more accurate interpretation of the results. Firstly, the sample scope of this study is limited because the participants were recruited from a heritage language school in Montreal. Considering the registration of the heritage language school is voluntary, it's possible to assume that parents or children who did not support heritage language maintenance or who were not interested in Chinese learning would have decided to drop out of the school. That is, the parents' or children's attitudes identified may be limited because the participants are a self-selected type.

Secondly, this study selected child participants from three age groups and tried to

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examine how age affects their attitudes toward Chinese language maintenance by comparison, and the results did show that children's attitudes at each age group have some common features. However, the comparison of participants at different age groups is not enough to know to what extent age played a role in children's different attitudes.

6.2 Contribution

Despite the limitations, this study contributes to the body of existing literature concerning attitudes and heritage language maintenance. Firstly, my findings fill the gap in previous research studies on Chinese heritage language attitude that Chinese immigrants in Canada in general hold supportive attitudes toward their heritage language maintenance. Through semi-structured interviews, this study also advances the extant literature on parent's attitudes by illustrating parents' reasons and considerations of their attitudes. For instance, parents emphasize effective communication within the family and positive cultural identity based on heritage language, as well as the potential benefits brought by Chinese learning. Furthermore, by comparing the three age groups, the study has made a contribution in terms of children's different attitudes at different age groups. Therefore, the heritage language education could apply targeted teaching methods.

6.3 Future Research

The present study presented a few interesting findings about attitudes and heritage language maintenance, but future research is required to explore children's attitudes toward heritage language maintenance which are ignored by most studies. Firstly, how children's attitudes toward heritage language maintenance change in the process of growth should be examined. In fact, children's attitudes are subject to many influencing factors, thus they always change with situations. For example, parental attitudes, peer environment, and learning burden

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from public school are the factors that might affect children's attitudes. In addition, it's also recommended for researchers to investigate parents' and children's different emphasis on oral skills (listening and speaking) and literacy skills. The present study mentioned the phenomenon that parents place more importance on oral skills of the Chinese language, but the reason why parents and children have different emphases and the results caused by such different emphases deserves more attention.

As discussed above, more and more immigrant parents realized the value of their heritage language and the value of maintaining their heritage language. However, heritage language maintenance needs more attention from several aspects like parents, school authorities, researchers and the whole society.

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Appendix A

Recruitment Letter to School Authority

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Junping Zhang and I am currently studying in the Master of Arts in Second Language Education program at McGill University. The study I am carrying out is a part of my Master of Arts thesis at the Faculty of Education, Department of Integrated Studies at McGill University. The study aims to investigate Chinese immigrant parents' and children's attitudes towards heritage language maintenance (Chinese) over the years. You and your students' participation will provide precious information to further explore the development of heritage language in Chinese immigrant families. In return, the study will help the school's population of heritage language learners by shedding light on the process of maintaining heritage languages as children grow older.

I would like to invite students enrolled in your school to participate in the research, and hope to obtain your permission to recruit and possibly conduct research at your school. The study will have two parts: interview with parents and interview with children. With your permission, I will talk to the group of parents at lunchtime, describing the study and giving the parents who are interested the consent letter which include a detailed explanation of the study. The parents will read and sign if they want to participate. I will contact them by phone or email to schedule the interviews.

Your students may feel nervous or anxious during the interviews, In order to handle such situation, the researcher will reassure participants that their answers will be kept confidential and their confidentiality will be maintained in all publications. Your students will be told that they don't have to answer any question they don't want to. If they seem nervous or anxious, the

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interviewer will stop the interview.. Also, I promise to protect students' confidentiality. Only the researcher and her supervisor would have access to students' information. Participants would be able to withdraw from the research at any time and ask for the researcher to destroy all data with no negative consequences.

Thank you for your consideration of this request and I would greatly appreciate your collaboration. If you have any questions or there are any further approval procedures, please contact me at junping.zhang@mail.mcgill.ca or via phone 439-979-8220.

Sincerely,
Juning Zhang

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Appendix B

The Verbal Content of Talking with Parents

Dear parents,

Good afternoon, my name is Junping Zhang and I am currently studying in the Masters of Arts in Second Language Education program at McGill University. I am carrying out a study which aims to investigate your and your children's attitudes towards Chinese language maintenance. Therefore, I want to invite children from age 5 to 15 and their parents to participate in this study. In return, you and your child will have an opportunity to know more about Chinese language maintenance. During the research, you and your children are supposed to have two separate interviews (one for the parent, and another for children) which will take you and your children about 40 minutes in total. If you are interested, please come to me for more details about the study.

Appendix C

Participant Informed Consent Letter

Researchers:

Junping Zhang, current student in the Masters of Arts in Second Language Education program at McGill University. My phone number is +1 438 979 8220 and my email is junping.zhang@mail.mcgill.ca

Supervisor:

Dr. Susan Ballinger, Second Language Education, McGill University,
susan.ballinger@mcgill.ca

Dr. Mela Sarkar, Second Language Education, McGill University, mela.sarkar@mcgill.ca

Title of Project:

Family and heritage language maintenance: Parents' and children's beliefs and attitudes over the years

Purpose of the Study:

This is an invitation for you and your child to participate in the research. The research aims to investigate the relationships among parents' and children's attitudes, family heritage language policy, and children's heritage language proficiency. The research will add important information to our knowledge about factors contributing to successful heritage language maintenance, particularly among Chinese immigrant families.

Study Procedures:

This study includes an interview with you and with your child. You and your child will be interviewed separately. You will be interviewed first regarding your beliefs, feelings, and actions in relation to your child's Chinese maintenance. Then your child will be interviewed about

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his/her attitudes and practices in relation to Chinese use and maintenance. The total time for both interviews will be less than an hour, and the interview will be audio-recorded, transcribed and analysed by the researcher. Only the researcher and her supervisor will have access to this data.

Voluntary Participation:

Participation in the study is voluntary. You and your child can refuse to participate in parts of the study, decline to answer any question, and withdraw from the study and ask for the researcher to destroy all your information at any time, for any reason. Whether you choose to participate or not will not result in any loss of benefit to which they are otherwise entitled.

Potential Risks:

Some children may feel nervous doing an interview, but the researcher will assure them that there are no right or wrong answers and that they can stop at any time for any reason. Besides, if they seem nervous or anxious, the researcher will stop the interview immediately.

Potential Benefits:

Your participation in this study will contribute to knowledge of best practices for maintenance of Chinese and other heritage languages, which could be used by community centers and heritage language schools to support other parents' efforts to maintain their heritage language with their children as their children grow older.

Compensation:

You and your child will not receive monetary compensation for participating, but you will receive gifts of appreciation like Chinese lunar calendars for you and bookmarks for your child.

Confidentiality:

In the study, the researcher will collect information including your and your child's name,

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age, and contact information. The identifiable data will be kept in a locked file cabinet. The audio-recordings of the interview will be stored in a password protected file on a password protected laptop. You and your children will never be identified by name. Only the researcher and the supervisor can access the data. Your child's response will not be shared with you.

The thesis results will be disseminated in the researcher's master thesis, conference presentations, and publications. The results will also be shared with all participants by email.

Yes: ____ No: ____ (You consent to your own and your child's participation in an audio-recorded interview.)

Questions:

Thank you for your consideration of this request and I would greatly appreciate your participation. If you have any questions, please contact me at junping.zhang@mail.mcgill.ca or via phone 439-979-8220, or my supervisor Dr. Susan Ballinger at susan.ballinger@mcgill.ca or Dr. Mela Sarkar at mela.sarkar@mcgill.ca

If you have any ethical concerns or complaints about your participation in this study, and want to speak with someone not on the research team, please contact the Associate Director, Research Ethics at 514-398-6831 or lynda.mcneil@mcgill.ca

Please sign below if you have read the above information and consent to participate in this study. Agreeing to participate in this study does not waive any of your rights or release the researchers from their responsibilities. A copy of this consent form will be given to you and the researcher will keep a copy.

Personal Information			
Parent's Name		Student's Name	
Child's Age	5-8 years old (); 9-11 years old (); 12-15 years old ()		

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Contact Information			
Phone Number		Email	

Parent's Signature:

Date:

Appendix D

Verbal Assent Protocol for Children

Hello (the name of the child),

My name is Junping and I am currently studying in the Masters of Arts in Second Language Education program at McGill University. I am doing a study about learning Chinese and that's why I need to do this interview with you. I will ask you some questions about your experience and opinions about learning Chinese. I will not share your answers with your parents. If you don't want to continue, we can stop now. During the interview, if you wish to stop, you can stop at any time. Again you won't get in trouble for this, and there are no right or wrong answers.

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Appendix E

Interview Questions for Parents

1. What's your name? What's your child's name?
2. How long have you lived in Canada?
3. What's your highest educational level?
4. How you rate your language proficiency level in Chinese, French, and English? (Please rate between point 1-7, with 1 representing the lowest proficiency level and 7 representing the highest possible proficiency level.)
5. Could you introduce the family members in your house and their daily practical languages?
6. What do you know about HL maintenance?
7. Where can you look to find information about HL maintenance?
8. What kind of information or resources would you like to have to help HL maintenance?
9. Have your beliefs toward HL maintenance changed over the years? If so, what are the changes and why?
10. Have you decided to maintain Chinese of your child? What informed your decision?
11. What language goals do you have for your child (speaking/listening, reading/writing, proficiency level)? (For the proficiency level, please rate between point 1-7, with 1 representing the lowest proficiency level and 7 representing the highest possible proficiency level.)
12. Do you think your beliefs and attitudes have affected your child's attitudes? If yes, how?
13. Which language do you prefer to use at your home?
14. Why did you enroll your child into Chinese weekend school?
15. Have you ever considered not maintaining Chinese with your child?
16. How would you describe your child's Chinese learning over the years? Have their language

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abilities been developing consistently or have there been periods where that learning has slowed or even reversed?

17. Which kind of things have you done to maintain Chinese in your family?

18. Do you have rules about speaking Chinese or other languages in your home? (Give examples)

19. Do you feel like your current use of Chinese is helping to maintain your child's Chinese proficiency? Why/Why not? If not, do you have any plans to change your current use of the language?

20. Has your language use or your language practices changed as your child has gotten older? If so, what are the changes and why did they change?

21. Do you have any concerns or worries related to maintain Chinese of your child?

22. How do you plan to deal with your concerns over time?

Appendix F

Interview Questions for Children

1. What's your name?
2. How old are you?
3. How long have you been studying Chinese formally?
4. How do you feel about speaking Chinese at home? Is it necessary or unnecessary for you?
5. Do you think Chinese is important in your life? Why?
6. What language do your parents expect you to use at home? How do you feel about that?
7. Did you have language activities together with your parents? Like reading Chinese books or listening Chinese audio-recordings together? How do you feel about that?
8. Do you want to continue learning Chinese?
9. Would you like to go to Chinese weekend school? Why?
10. Would you like to talk with your grandparents?
11. Which language do you use most frequent with your parents? With your siblings? With your friends?
12. Do your parents help you to learn Chinese? How did they help you? How do you feel about that?
13. Would you like to find a job which involve using Chinese in the future?
14. Would you like to let your children learn Chinese in the future?