

Parental perceptions toward and practices of heritage language maintenance: Focusing on the United States and Canada

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This study reviews 17 studies since the year of 2000 on the perceptions and practices of immigrant parents who reside in the United States or Canada with respect to their children's heritage language maintenance (HLM). The findings suggest that parental perceptions may change due to practical considerations and vary with different degrees of expectation, emphases, and reasons. To apply their attitudes into practice, the body of literature shows that parents take the responsibility to make efforts, through trying to make full use of the in-house and external resources such as creating language environment and attending heritage language school and church. However, some of them have little enthusiasm, and some of them change their language practices. Also, there are discrepancies between what they think and what they practice. Several challenges are synthesized including children's changing language practices, their resistance to attending heritage language school, and parents' lack of time and energy. Further implications are discussed regarding children's bilingual/ multilingual development, parental efforts, and external resources. It is concluded that joint efforts from parents, educational institutions, governments, and other organizations should be made to tackle the issues in HLM.

Keywords: Heritage Language Maintenance; Language perception; Language Policy; Language Practice; Language Vitality

1. Introduction

The United States and Canada are two countries with linguistic and cultural diversity due partly to an increasing number of immigrants. The definition of immigrant and immigration are sometimes vague to some extent (Ploese, 2017) and immigrants are always represented in media biasedly (Heberle & Morgado, 2016). Immigrant in this paper, under a relatively neutral stance, refers to people who are foreign-born and migrate from the home country, including those who gain citizenship through naturalization, plus the lawful and unauthorized migrants (US Census Bureau, 2016a). According to the latest statistics from US Census Bureau (2016b), the immigrant population has increased from 31.1 million in 2000 to about 42.2 million in 2016, representing 13.2% of the total U.S. population. If U.S.-born children of

immigrants are added, there are approximately 84 million immigrants that account for a quarter of the overall U.S. population (Zong & Batalova, 2017). Likewise, the immigrant population in Canada is projected to reach between up to 30% of the total population in 2036, compared with 21.9% in 2016 (Statistics Canada, 2017a, 2017b). Therefore, there is a continuously growing number of immigrants living in the United States and Canada, lending warranty and relevance for further investigation of issues such as their heritage language maintenance (HLM) and use.

Among immigrants in the United States, 84.1% of their heritage language (HL) is not English and likewise 72.5% of immigrants in Canada speaks a language other than English or French (Statistics Canada, 2017c; US Census Bureau, 2016b). Nonetheless, under the context of English-favor policy, the next generation of these immigrants tend to speak English most often, which leads to a gradual loss of the HL (Fillmore, 2000; Montrul, 2010). In the recent years, some researchers believe that heritage language loss and shift to English among non-English-speaking immigrant families will generate negative effects on children, their family relationships, and even the whole society (Fishman, 2001; Lee, 2013; Tannenbaum & Howie, 2002).

Many researchers agree that bilinguals are thought to possess dual identities associated with two different languages they speak (e.g., Salmani Nodoushan, 2013; Salmani Nodoushan & Garcia Laborda, 2014). Because the maintenance of HL is thought to be significant in shaping identities and socializing children into the heritage culture (Fishman, 2001), the discouragement of children's mother tongue could harm their cultural identity development (Enns-Kananen, 2012). Consequently, the transmission of ethnic culture and value, which are more than just language, may be obstructed (Lee, 2013). In addition, the abandonment of the heritage language is likely to weaken people's competitiveness, based on the belief that bilingual or multilingual ability is an asset for academic and job market success (Cummins, 2001; Krashen, 2000). Regarding the family, the shift and even loss of heritage language will probably hinder the communication between family members and thus, to some extent, impair the familial bond (Fillmore, 2000). Furthermore, the gradual disappearance of heritage language is also considered to be an erosion of the whole multicultural society (Fishman, 2001). Hence, Fishman (2001) advocates that heritage languages should be valued and dignified for the benefit of the society. Although the importance of HLM is highly emphasized, few studies, however, have examined the empirical studies in children's HLM specifically from the perspective of family members.

Based on the changing demographics in the United States and Canada, the importance of HLM and the role of family, the previous scholarly reviews on

related topics, and the theoretical framework of language vitality developed by Tse (2001), the current paper aims to synthesize and analyze empirical studies on HLM, with specific focus on the perception and the practice of immigrant family in the United States and Canada. Three research questions are raised to guide the analysis of literature:

1. What perceptions about their children's HLM have immigrant parents expressed?
2. In what efforts parents have sought to support their children's HLM?
3. What challenges have parents encountered in trying to support their children's HLM?

2. Background

HLM generally refers to perceptions and behaviors related to the maintenance of a specific heritage language used by the immigrants who have cultural connections to this language other than the dominant language (Kelleher, 2010). There are several literature reviews in HLM. For example, García (2003) discusses the theoretical and methodological trends in research in HLM globally from 1998–2002. However, this literature review only briefly considers empirical studies in the United States and Canada, and its focus is not solely on family. Park's (2013) study attempts to fill this gap by reviewing immigrant students' heritage language and cultural identity development in the United States and Canada. This literature review not only identifies several benefits of heritage language development but also recognizes the important role of families, ethnic communities, and schools in maintaining and promoting heritage language and cultural identity. Both García (2003) and Park (2013) agree that family is a significant factor to children's language development, in that family members' language ideology and related practices will have an impact on children's language preference and use (Báez, 2013; Jeon, 2008; Wu, Lee, & Leung, 2014). Other literature reviews examine issues in HLM from such perspectives as community-based HL programs (Lee & Wright, 2014) and language acquisition (Montrul, 2010).

The current literature review is also informed by the theoretical concept of language vitality (Tse, 2001), which refers to language users' perception of the status and prestige of a certain language. Tse argues that language vitality is shaped by peer groups, institutions, and parents. These three factors jointly influence the family beliefs and their language choice. Moreover, the environment fostered by these three factors exerts an impact on the development of heritage language and cultural identity. Therefore, it sheds light on parents' language practices and strategies in fulfilling those three aspects.

3. Method

The methodological framework is Galvan's (2014) guidebook of literature review writing. It provides useful guidelines for the whole process of conducting literature review. Particularly it provides concise and understandable procedures for literature identification and preliminary analysis.

The online search started from ERIC via EBSCOhost, which contained a wide variety of databases in different academic fields such as language maintenance, education, and culture. Other electronic search engines such as Google Scholar, Linguistics and Language Behavior Abstracts (LLBA), and Jstor were also used. The studies included were empirical studies published in peer-reviewed journals after the year of 2000, building on the work of García (2003) and Park (2013). Based on the purpose of this literature review, the search was limited to articles focusing on both immigrant families' perceptions and practices in relation to their children's HLM and geographical location was specified in either the United States or Canada. Therefore, studies which only focused on parental perceptions or on the parental practices in supporting their children's HLM were excluded. Besides, the search was limited to articles published in English.

Informed largely by Tse's (2001) conceptualization of language vitality and Galvan's (2014) guidelines, the content searching words were combinations of *heritage language maintenance, attitude, practice*, the population search terms included *parent, children, immigrant*, and the geographic search terms were either *USA* or *Canada*. Other searching strategies included (a) using alternative/synonymous terms such as *primary language, family language, parental involvement*, and *strategies* to exhaust possible results, (b) inserting asterisks such as *child*, US*, and Canad** to generate all possible word endings, and (c) putting linking terms such as 'or' or 'and' to broaden or narrow the search. As the articles were initially located, their reference lists were also examined to include relevant studies.

After careful selection, 17 studies were determined to be reviewed intensively and their relevant information was organized in categories based on their research questions, methodology, major findings, conclusions, and implications (Galvan, 2014). More than half of the studies (11 out of 17) employed qualitative research design; four used mix-methods, and only two were quantitative studies. Nearly all of the studies (15 out of 17) specified immigrant families in the United States, with two studies focusing on participants in Canada. Because the purpose of this literature review is not to discuss the potential geographical difference in HLM between these two main countries in North America, the small number of studies yielded about Canada can be accepted. Additionally, the distribution of HL used by the

participants among these studies included seven studies of Chinese, five studies of Korean, two of Spanish, one of Japanese, one of languages such as Russian and Ukrainian spoken by immigrants from Eastern Europe, and one study involved four language groups namely Arabic, Chinese, Spanish, and Hebrew.

4. Results

In relation to the research questions, the evidence reported in these 17 studies was synthesized and analyzed in three categories: parental perceptions, parental practices, and the challenges faced by the immigrant parents based on the above research questions.

4.1. Parental perceptions toward their children's HLM

The present literature review illustrates that most of the immigrant parents in North America share positive attitude toward their children's heritage language learning and maintenance, at least before their children entering into the formal schooling system. Nevertheless, the positiveness varied in terms of degree and language emphasis. Specifically, more than half of the respondents in Lao (2004) hold higher expectation on their children's Chinese proficiency to achieve middle school to high school level. Similarly, all of the participating families in Li's (2006) study expect their children to become biliterate and multilingual (Mandarin, Cantonese, and English) in Canada.

Such relatively higher positiveness is shared by other immigrant families that speak other languages other than Chinese. For instance, the Spanish-speaking participants attach importance on L1 literacy no matter whether their children's heritage language is actually maintained or not (Guardado, 2002). Regarding language emphasis, Liao and Larke (2008) explored the reasons why parents decide to send their children to Chinese heritage school. They found that most parents expect their children to master conversational and reading skills but not writing. Conversely, Hashimoto and Lee (2011) interviewed and observed three Japanese immigrant families in the United States, and these participants placed more emphasis on HL literacy skills than oral skills.

It is worth noting that one Spanish-speaking parent identified by Suarez's (2002) study held opposite stance on HLM. This participant associated Spanish with a lot of negative impressions such as crimes, rudeness, and school suspension, which is not typically shared by other participants in other studies. Meanwhile the participant thinks highly about English as a key to assimilate into the mainstream society and therefore he shows resistance to his children's HLM. On the contrary, the other participating Spanish-speaking

parents strongly believe that it is just because of the existing discrimination that their children should master Spanish and strive for the best in order to change others' wrong judgment.

This assimilating orientation is also held by participants in other studies who strongly desire their children to master English (Jeon, 2008; Zhang, 2010). Jeon (2008) explored Korean immigrants' language ideologies and its enactment in daily life from three groups of participants: Korean heritage undergraduate students, first-generation Korean adult immigrants, and one Korean immigrant family. The researcher found that the language ideologies expressed by the participants fall on a continuum from assimilationist to pluralist. However, after the children entered higher educational institution, their parents changed their minds and encouraged their children to learn HL. It is partly because parents would no longer need to be worried about whether learning HL will interfere with their children's English studies. Alternatively, the Fujianese-speaking participants in Zhang's (2010) study change their attitudes because they think their children's poor Chinese capability negatively affects family communication.

4.1.1. Communication and cohesion

Evidence shows that parents promote children's HLM in order to facilitate communication among family members and ultimately consolidate the family relationship (Hashimoto & Lee, 2011; Yan, 2013). This is especially true when communication occur between children and their grandparents (Kang, 2012; Liao & Larke, 2008; Nesteruk, 2010; Park & Sarkar, 2007), partly because grandparents are usually limited in English (Kung, 2013). Furthermore, Brown (2011) revealed that it is thought to be impolite not to speak heritage language to senior family members according to traditions of some ethnic groups such as Korean. This is also supported from the perspective of grandparents in Jeon (2008)'s study who express that if their grandchildren talk to them in a language other than Korean, they are not willing to continue the conversation. Some parents even believed that if their children can maintain heritage language, they can easily communicate with other residents in a same ethnic language community (Lao, 2004; Yan, 2013).

Another factor why immigrant parents want their children to learn and use their heritage language is due to their limited English ability (Kang, 2012; Leung & Uchikoshi, 2012; Li, 2006). Heritage language instead of English should be used among family members otherwise the parents could hardly communicate with their children smoothly. Specific examples were presented in Zhang's (2010) and Nesteruk's (2010) research. It turns out to be embarrassing for both sides when children share their school assignments with their parents and yet they were not in the same language channel. The

reason is that it is hard for the parents with lower English proficiency to understand their children's assignments and school arrangements, even if the parents really intend to do so. Meanwhile, children have difficulty in explaining their inner emotions to their parents entirely and fluently in heritage language. Therefore, some parents believe that heritage language is rather important for conveying deeper feelings (Lee, 2013).

Reciprocally, strong family ties are also found to be crucial to children's HLM. A quantitative study involving 250 participants ($N=250$) conducted by Luo and Wiseman (2000) showed that strong and cohesive mother-child relation is significantly different from low mother-child cohesion in terms of the children's HL use frequency and their attitude toward HL, in that high cohesion leads to high language use. The study also suggested that cohesive grandparent-grandchild relation significantly contributed to children's HLM.

4.1.2. Employment driven by the economy

Employment factor also affects immigrant parents' perception on HLM. Lee (2013) interviewed seven children and their Korean immigrant parents in a case study regarding the role of HLM in order to understand how the parents' perspectives and practices impact their children's HLM and cultural identity development. The findings suggested that those participating parents who plan to stay in the United States hold instrumental belief that their children are more likely to find a job in the host country with the growing economy if they can be bilingual or even multilingual (Lee, 2013). Similar results can be found in Guardado (2002) and thus from the parents' perspective, knowing more languages leads to gaining more economic benefits and becoming more capable in job market.

Besides of children's potential to get a satisfactory job when they grow up, some immigrant parents also believe that they may get a better job in their home country and thus they still hold it essential for their children to learn and maintain heritage language (Kang 2012; Lee, 2013; Li, 2006). For example, Kang (2012) interviewed seven Korean immigrant families in the United States in order to explore their perceptions and supportive practices in regard to their second generation children's language development. One of the prominent findings is that the parents do not preclude the possibility of returning back to Korea if better career opportunities arise. Hence, they expect that their children learn to speak and write Korean in order to live and assimilate in Korean society.

Therefore, parents hold positive attitude toward their children's HLM due to the factor of employment for themselves and for their children, in the time of globalization.

4.1.3. Ethnic and cultural identity

Nine studies whose participants are Korean or Chinese immigrants reveal that they tend to associate heritage language with ethnic identity. For example, all of the Korean-speaking parents in Lee's (2013) study consider their children as Korean and thus they should learn and speak Korean. Similar opinions are expressed by Chinese immigrants (Leung & Uchikoshi, 2012; Liao & Larke, 2008). They do not expect that their children forget their identity, believing that maintaining the heritage language is conducive to shaping children's positive ethnic identity (Brown, 2011; Kang, 2012; Lao, 2004). Moreover, some parents are determined to foster dual identities in their children (Jeon, 2008; Li, 2006; Suarez, 2002). In a case study of Chinese immigrant parents in Canada, Li (2006) found that one child is expected to speak heritage language at home with their parents whereas to perform in Canadian style at school, because they believed that it is of equal importance to learn both English and Chinese. Likewise, two Spanish-speaking parents imparted an ideology to their children that the only way to thrive in mainstream is to master both the dominant language and the heritage language, and incorporate two identities (Suarez, 2002).

In addition, seven studies discuss the role of heritage culture with respect to HLM. On the one hand, HLM exerts a significant impact on tradition transmission and internalization (Brown, 2011; Li, 2006; Liao & Larke, 2008; Park & Sarkar, 2007). Park and Sarkar (2007) conducted a case study of nine Korean-Canadian immigrant parents exploring their attitudes toward and efforts to support their children's HLM. One of the reasons that convinced the parents to endorse the necessity for their children's HLM, suggested by the findings, is that their children's being proficient in Korean facilitates and develops their cultural identity as Koreans. Conversely, it is indicated that heritage culture also bolsters children's HLM (Guardado, 2002; Hashimoto & Lee, 2011). For example, a group of Spanish-speaking parents exposed their children to Hispanic culture including pop culture, children's literature, and children's songs in order to foster their children's L1 identity thus promoting their Spanish development (Guardado, 2002). Hebrew-speaking parents were the only ethnic group that maintained heritage language chiefly for religious matters rather than other reasons such as inner family communication (Yan, 2013). Therefore, the role that cultural factor plays in children's HLM is crucial.

4.1.4. Intellectual benefits

Contrary to those parents who are concerned that learning and maintaining heritage language would hinder the progress of English learning (Jeon, 2008), participants in Kung's (2013) study self-reported that their heritage language

and English are not mutually exclusive; instead, they are interdependent and mutually beneficial. This is consistent with what Li (2006) has found. In this case study, one family maintained that being capable in heritage language will facilitate English development and thus they taught their child Chinese literacy at home and were never worried about their child's progress in English. Apart from boosting English proficiency, HLM is also thought to enhance overall academic learning (Park & Sarkar, 2007; Yan, 2013). Particularly, the data showed that 83% of Arab and 68% of Chinese immigrant parents agree that HLM is important for academic learning (Yan, 2013); more than half of the Chinese respondents even believed that it is constructive for academic success (Yan, 2013). In addition to these perceived advantages, some immigrant professionals who migrated from Eastern Europe further argue that children's learning heritage language is supportive of their cognitive development (Nesteruk, 2010). Leung & Uchikoshi (2012) conducted a quantitative research and provided supporting evidence that children in bilingual programs studying two languages simultaneously perform significantly better in terms of English vocabulary, HL character reading, and HL narrative task, compared to those in English-only programs.

4.2. Parents' practices to promote HLM

Many immigrant parents take the responsibility of children's HLM, and hence they adopt various strategies to create a facilitative atmosphere in order to encourage their children to learn the heritage language, no matter at home or using external resources.

4.2.1. In-house efforts

Eight studies documented that the parents proactively promote heritage language at home, and some of them even adopt heritage-language-only policy (Kung, 2013; Leung & Uchikoshi, 2012). Take Chinese immigrant family as an example; two groups of parents in Li's (2006) study reported that they speak Chinese at home, and one of them reported that they even ask their children to respond in Chinese. This finding is supported by two quantitative studies. The survey data in Yan's (2013) research show that out of 16 Chinese-speaking parents, all but one stated that they sometimes to most of the time speak Chinese at home with their children. Leung and Uchikoshi (2012) also demonstrated that 41 out of 56 Chinese immigrant children are in Cantonese-only home language environment. Similar practices were found in some Korean (Kang, 2012; Park & Sarkar, 2007) and Spanish-speaking immigrant families (Guardado, 2002). However, Yan (2013) noted that less than half of the Spanish-speaking respondents speak Spanish at home.

Apart from the family language policy, immigrant parents have undertaken a

lot of specific efforts including watching TV programs, listening to radios/video tapes, and reading books (Kung, 2013; Lao, 2004; Li, 2006; Park & Sarkar, 2007). For example, Lao (2004) surveyed 86 parents and found that 65.3% of Chinese-speaking parents would occasionally to always read stories in Chinese to their children. However, less than 30% of them have more than 20 Chinese books at home.

Furthermore, Guardado (2002) found that although some Spanish-speaking parents are aware of the importance of HLM, they have little enthusiasm in helping their children to achieve that objective. Similar findings are also shared by some Korean and Chinese immigrant families (Lee, 2013; Li, 2006). For instance, some parents in Li (2006) would not compel their children to speak Chinese because they are so confident that their children will finally learn it.

Even though some parents desire to take action, oftentimes there are discrepancies between what they think and what they actually practice. Lao (2004) showed that 88.5% of Chinese immigrants expected their children to speak Chinese or mix with English at home, but actually nearly half of them spoke English or mostly English with their children. Several possible reasons are suggested by Li (2006) and Zhang (2010). One pair of Chinese immigrant parents in Canada are not satisfied with their children's accented English, thus they usually speak English at home and read English story books to their children, although they still anticipate that their children could achieve biliterary (Chinese and English) and trilingual (Cantonese, Mandarin, and English) success (Li, 2006). Additionally, Zhang (2010) found that one participating Chinese family values the role of heritage language and yet they seldom use Chinese at home partly because they can understand what their children have talked about in English.

In addition, three studies (Brown, 2011; Nesteruk, 2010; Suarez, 2002) documented that parents have made substantive attempts to maintain their children's heritage language and initially it appeared to be effective. However, as their children grew older, their parents changed their mind, and then their home language practices have also been changed. Finally, they ended up with communicating with their children dominantly in English. Several possible factors are identified to exert an impact on this phenomenon: (a) parents may have insufficient time and energy to take care of children's heritage language learning, (b) fathers always do not take this issue seriously, and (c) parents are concerned about causing family tension when the children are in adolescence (Nesteruk, 2010). Showing agreement with the last reason, Brown (2011) also speculated that this shift of family language policy is probably due to parents' English improvement. Suarez (2002) supplemented this claim with another reason: that parents are worried about their children

being laughed at by others if they could not speak fluent English.

4.2.2. Resources outside of the house

The prevalent practice among immigrant parents to maintain their children's heritage language is to send them to a heritage language schools/programs (cf. Jeon, 2008; Li, 2006). There are many driving reasons. In specific, parents in Lee (2013) expected their children to mingle with other co-ethnic children than just studying heritage language. Apart from children's socializing with other co-ethnic friends, parents themselves could also build their social network with other parents in the heritage language school (Liao & Larke, 2008). Another reason responded by parents who enrolled their children to heritage language school is that they hoped their children could read in heritage language (Li, 2006). Still, some parents had no other better solution but to send their children to heritage language programs, because they found it challenging to handle their children's language use at home (Brown, 2011). However, Nesteruk (2010) found that even if there are available resources around their community, several Romanian and Ukrainian immigrant parents are not prone to utilize them, but the researcher has not further stated the reasons.

Although all the participants agreed on the role of church in maintaining heritage language, opinions diverged regarding the effectiveness of this community resource (Park & Sarkar, 2007). In this study, some parents held that church provides a platform where co-ethnic people could gather and children could communicate with people from different ages to enhance their heritage language proficiency. However, other parents argued that mere interaction in church is not sufficient for the children to cultivate their heritage language.

Another popular way identified by some studies is to visit the home country with their children during holidays (Kang, 2012; Kung, 2013; Nesteruk, 2010). In this way, children could be immersed in heritage language speaking environment. Besides visiting relatives in home country, parents often created opportunities for children to communicate with other friends who are also from the same home country (Nesteruk, 2010). Luo and Wiseman (2000) supported this argument quantitatively by concluding that peers have more influence than family on children's HLM.

4.3. Challenges parents have faced

Research documented that after children started formal schooling, most of them no longer used heritage language even at home to talk to their parents (Brown, 2011; Kang, 2012; Nesteruk, 2010). All of the 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, which is echoed by Eastern European immigrant families in Nesteruk's (2010) research. Those parents feel frustrated with the language shift of their children after going to school. In some Japanese immigrant families, the reason for learning heritage language to keep identity roots no longer sounded persuasive to their children after they grew up, with the decreasing interest in heritage language learning (Hashimoto & Lee, 2011). Specifically, due to the lack of heritage language (HL) school around the community, Japanese immigrant families in Hashimoto and Lee (2011) tried to teach their children at home. However, the pedagogy and the learning materials failed to draw children's interests or meet their needs. Therefore, parents came up with strategies to make HL language learning more relevant by using manga books, handheld playing machine, and cartoon figure cards, all of which are presented in Japanese.

Although parents tried their best to create opportunities for their children to use HL, it turns out that children speak English instead of heritage language with their siblings, let alone other co-ethnic peers. Particularly, younger siblings were found to use English more often than the older siblings (Brown, 2011; Lee, 2013; Nesteruk, 2010). Three studies also identified that children rarely speak heritage language even though they share a same heritage language when playing with other friends (Guardado, 2002; Lee, 2013; Nesteruk, 2010).

Even if HL school is available and sending children to HL school is one pervasive way for many immigrant parents to support their children's HL learning and development, children's attitudes go opposite to their parents' expectation. The current literature review yielded no research providing evidence that children like this way of learning their HLs. Rather, there is a great deal of evidence suggesting that children are resistant to go to HL school and most of them expressed that they are forced to do so (Brown, 2011; Jeon, 2008; Kang, 2012; Li, 2006). Four reported reasons are synthesized. First, children are confused about why they need to study a language in a country where that language is not widely spoken (Brown, 2011). Second, children found that learning HL is hard and the pedagogy always disinterested them. For instance, teachers oftentimes asked students to copy and write characters for so many times (Brown, 2011; Kang, 2012; Li, 2006). Third, the playing time is shortened or conflicted with children's extracurricular activities. In other words, the children believed that attending HL school has occupied much of their playing time (Brown, 2011; Jeon, 2008). Much to their disappointment, there is no recreational facility in heritage language school (Li, 2006). Additionally, Jeon (2008) reported that children are not motivated to attend HL school because they could not get credits that could be transferred to their public school system.

Admittedly, most of the children showed negative attitudes toward learning in heritage language school. However, some of the Korean American students are willing to “relearn” their HL after entering college (Jeon, 2008). Possible reasons may include the career potential of connecting and communicating with Korean-speaking clients and the application of Korean to academic work (Jeon, 2008).

Moreover, some parents spent most of the time in making a living to support the family and ended up with no more additional energy and time to take care of children’s heritage language learning. This is also confirmed by Yan’s (2013) results. In this survey study, although lack of language environment is regarded as the main obstacle to HLM by the majority of participants, 37% of Chinese immigrant parents and 44% of Arabs revealed that they have limited time to teach their children heritage language at home. Nesteruk (2010) further commented that even if parents have time, they have already spent it on helping with children’s school assignments, after which parents felt tired to tutor their children in their heritage language. However, even if parents invested time to teach heritage language to their children, Hashimoto and Lee (2011) found that it always conflicts with children’s own schedule. Moreover, parents worried that their limited professional knowledge could not satisfy children’s needs as they advanced heritage language learning, and thus they strongly believed that formal language teachers can fill this gap. Nevertheless, if there is little support available from the community, it could make HLM more challenging (Hashimoto & Lee, 2011; Yan, 2013).

5. Discussion

The current literature review sought to better understand immigrant family members’ attitudes and practices with regard to their children’s heritage language maintenance (HLM). The geographic focus is in the United States and Canada. Overall, this current literature review further supports Tse’s (2001) language vitality, which frames the dynamic relationship between (a) peer groups, institutions, and parents and (b) parents’ language practices and heritage language maintenance.

The review of these 17 studies shows that nearly all the participating parents hold positive attitude toward their children’s HLM with various expectations, degrees, and emphases. The attitudes fall “on somewhere in between the opposite poles of the continuum” (Jeon, 2008, p. 211), with assimilation-oriented at one end and pluralism-oriented at the other. The attitudes are subject to change due to children’s language development and parents’ practical consideration. In addition, the underlying factors in supporting HLM found in these articles include promoting family communication and cohesion, having more employment opportunities in the future, maintaining

ethnic and cultural identity, and having intellectual benefits.

The body of literature shows that, in order to apply their attitudes to practice, parents take the responsibility to make efforts through trying to make full use of the in-house and external resources such as creating language environment and attending heritage language schools and churches. This is consistent with previous literature review findings, which argued that families have already served as an unreplaceable role in HLM (Park, 2013). However, studies in the current review further demonstrate that although most parents are aware of the importance of putting efforts to HLM at home, some of them are not proactive. Additionally, what parents believe and expect sometimes tends to be different from what they actually carry out. Even though HLM does happen at an earlier time, some immigrant families shift their family language practice from HL dominant to English dominant (Brown, 2011; Nesteruk, 2010; Suarez, 2002). Moreover, there are controversies regarding the influence of heritage language schools and the churches. Thus, these variations will deepen our understanding of parental efforts and worth further scholarly inquiry about parents' utilization of internal and external resources.

The current literature review also documented some major challenges parents have encountered. These challenges include children's language practices changing to speak the dominant language more often, their resistance to attending heritage language school, and parents' lack of time and energy. Therefore, efforts from different social parts should be involved in overcoming these difficulties in the process of supporting children's HLM.

Based on the findings of this review, implications are discussed in terms of children's bilingual/multilingual development, parental efforts, and external resources, which align with and can further enrich Tse's (2001) framework of language vitality.

First, there is no agreement among people on whether learning two languages together will have negative consequences. On the one hand, for instance, Hu (2016) not only confirmed that first language will influence the second language learning but also found that more than half (56%) of the errors made in second language learning were caused by first language interference. For the writing ability, similar conclusion was made by Anderson, Vanderhoff, and Donovan (2013) that bilingual students tend to perform worse than monolingual students in college-level writing. The reason may due to language learners' inadequacy of cognitive competence in English writing (Salmani Nodoushan, 2007a, 2007b, 2016).

This controversy becomes even complicated when it comes to multilingual contexts, as more and more people, especially children in immigrant families,

are born and raised in two or more languages. In a fine-grain level, Hermas (2014) found that initial L3 (English) learning is influenced exclusively by L1 (Arabic) morphosyntax which hinders the transfer of L2 (French). However, different findings were found in Cai and Cai (2015). The researchers examined the influence of L1 (Chinese) and L2 (English) in L3 (French) past tense comprehension. The results indicated a positive association between prior L2 knowledge in tense and L3 comprehension. In addition to the influence by language(s), Salmani Nodoushan (2010) also found that explicit instruction can also exert positive effect on L3 reading.

On the other hand, results which favor that HLM is conducive to English study are all self-reported in this current review. Therefore, more empirical research especially those from the fields of language acquisition and psycholinguistics should be launched to investigate the dynamic relation between HLM and English learning such as whether and in what way(s) they are mutually beneficial or exclusive and whether there is any factor at any level that may mediate this relation. The outcomes of these researches would considerably shape the parents' attitudes toward HL versus English and thus guide their practices regarding fostering bilingual/multilingual development in their children.

Apart from the factor of the influence of dominate language, the role of family in children's HLM is also worthy of further discussion. Are there any other possible factors in the family setting that contribute to the language shifting? There are many issues and challenges related to the immigrant parents revealed by this paper such as lack of enthusiasm, the discrepancy between parents' resolution and actual practice, the change of language use, and limitation of time and energy. Thus, besides the need to investigate the HL-L2 relation, more scholarly attention should be paid to the parents' efforts, which serve to be productive to children's HLM (Hashimoto & Lee, 2011; Kang, 2012). Nesteruk (2010) has provided a more process-based analytical framework which involves parental attitudes, parental efforts, challenges they faced, and adjustment in relation to HLM. This may provide some insights into the future research in framing the analytical structure. Moreover, research should not only remain on documenting the perspectives, practices, and challenges, it should take a step forward to evaluate the effectiveness of parental efforts.

Broadly speaking, studies indicate that external factors such as community resources and school system should exert their farther-reaching impacts than ever before in promoting children's HLM. This is consistent with the findings of previous literature reviews, which hold that HLM is a complex process consisting of many affecting variables (García, 2003; Montrul, 2010). The current paper also suggests that most children share negative feelings to

heritage language school/program, and some of them change to relearn HL in the college. Therefore, such issue calls for revisiting of HL school/program in many aspects such as teacher's pedagogy, course schedule, and teaching materials. It also warrants additional research on why heritage language learners choose to relearn the language in college. In addition, research findings indicate that immigrant children who are afraid of being laughed at and having communicative difficulty in K-12 school setting tend to hide their heritage identity and shift to speak English only. Therefore, the educational setting is thought to be the main vehicle for fostering multiculturalism, treating diversity as resource rather than problem (Cummins, 2001; Menghini, 2017). A successful example provided by Lee (2013) is that teachers provide opportunities for immigrant students to use their HL, which makes students realize that their HL is valued rather than being marginalized. Furthermore, policy makers should review the current policies in order to better preserve and encourage heritage language development and promote cultural diversity in society.

6. Conclusion

In sum, this paper synthesizes and analyzes what perceptions immigrant parents who live in Canada and the United States have toward and how they support their children's HLM, plus what challenges these parents might encounter in this process. The findings reveal that parental perceptions may change due to practical considerations and vary with different degrees of expectation, emphases, and reasons. Furthermore, it is concluded that parents have tried to make full use of the in-house and external resources such as creating language environment and attending heritage language school and church. However, some of the children shows little enthusiasm, and some of them change their language practices. In addition, there are discrepancies between what the immigrant parents think and what they have actually practiced. Challenges in the process of HLM include children's changing language practices, their resistance to attending heritage language school, and parents' lack of time and energy. This paper thus argues that there are many potential and pressing issues in HLM that are worth further inquiry. On the one hand, immigrant parents should continue making efforts in promoting their children's HLM since the loss of a language means more than just losing a way of communication. On the other hand, joint efforts from the educational institutions, governments, and other organizations should be made to investigate and tackle the issues in HLM to promote harmony and diversity in our society.

There are chiefly two limitations in this paper which warrant more research on this topic. First, the degree of representiveness may be affected by only reviewing 17 studies due to the relatively strict searching criteria. Hence, the

discussions and conclusions in this study should not be generalized to all the contexts. Moreover, further investigations of the role of peers, K-12 schools, and other societal support structures for HLM are needed. The geographic locations can also be extended to enrich the understanding of HLM. Second, this literature review followed the assumption held by most of the included studies that there is only one heritage language or culture. However, this is not always the case; as the population with different cultural backgrounds moves increasingly around the globe, so is the ever-changing and growing academic communities of applied linguistics (Brown, 2016). Therefore, it adds complexity and affords possibilities to the future research on HLM under the context of multilingualism and multiculturalism.

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