Understanding Undergraduates of Chinese Heritage in the UK:

Motivations and Challenges

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Abstract

A growing number of British universities are offering degree programs in the Chinese language. While students of ethnic Chinese background have endured as a steady source of students studying for a degree in Chinese at British universities, they remain an uncharted terrain of research. The aim of this study is to fill this research gap. With a goal of helping to more effectively tap the potential of heritage learners to meet the urgent language need, this study draws on an analysis of open-ended questionnaire responses and follow-up interviews to explore both the motivations behind the choice of heritage learners to pursue a degree in Chinese and the specific challenges that they face during their studies.

Introduction

The British Council has unambiguously identified Chinese as one of the top five languages that the UK will need the most in the next twenty years (2013). This conclusion was based on a range of economic and non-economic factors, including the current language deficit in the country. Among European countries, Britain has one of the largest populations of people of Chinese origin. According to the 2011 UK census, British Chinese numbered approximately 433,150, accounting for 0.7% of the UK population. The percentage was 0.4% in the 2001 census and 0.3% in the 1991 census, which was the first to include a question on ethnicity (Sillitoe & White, 1992). Primarily because of continuing immigration, over the

past decade, the Chinese have become the fastest-growing ethnic minority in Britain (Jivraj & Simpson, 2015).

With no clear pattern in their geographical distribution, in contrast to North America, the Chinese are more decentralized and widespread than other ethnic minorities in the UK. However, the Chinese form no more than 3% of the population in any single electoral area (The Office for National Statistics, 2009). It is perhaps because of such decentralization that Britain has not yet developed well-established institutional structures, such as publicly funded bilingual schools like those found in Canada (Comanaru & Noels, 2009), to support the cultural and linguistic vitality of the Chinese communities. The first English-Mandarin bilingual free school in the UK did not open until 2014 and it opened to promote bilingual education rather than to support the British-Chinese communities (Gurney-Read, 2013).

A growing number of British universities are offering degree programs in the Chinese language. While Chinese heritage language (CHL) learners have been a continuing source of students studying for a degree in Chinese at British universities, they remain an uncharted terrain of research. The goal of this study is to address this lacuna. In anticipation of the ability to take better advantage of the potential of CHL learners to meet the urgent language need, this study draws on an analysis of open-ended questionnaire responses and follow-up interviews to explore the motivations behind the CHL learners' degree choice and the specific challenges that they face during their studies.

Theoretical Framework

Robert Gardner and Wallace Lambert, both Canadian social psychologists, published their seminal work in 1972, through which they established language learning motivation as a research area. Based on the finding that the effect of motivation on learning another language was independent of the learner's aptitude or ability, they proposed two kinds of motivation: integrative motivation, which reflects "a sincere and personal interest in the people and culture represented by the other group," and instrumental motivation, which shows "the

practical value and advantages of learning a new language" (Gardner & Lambert, 1972, p. 132). Gardner's (1985, 2001) widely cited socio-educational model, which spawned a wealth of research in a range of contexts, further elaborated these theoretical concepts.

While Gardner's model continues to serve as an important theoretical foundation in second/foreign language motivation research, scholars (e.g., Lu & Li, 2008; Ushioda & Dörnyei, 2012) have raised questions about the conceptual distinction between instrumental and integrative motivation. Moving beyond the social psychological perspectives on the analysis of motivation, Dörnyei (1994) expanded Gardner's framework into three levels: the language level (integrative and instrumental motivational subsystems), the learner level (individual need for achievement and self-confidence, including language use anxiety), and the learning situation level (course-, teacher- and group-specific motivational components). The present study cuts across the different levels.

While motivational change during the process of second/foreign language learning became an area of research focus around the turn of the century (Dörnyei & Ottó, 1998), traditional research on the motivation to engage in learning (e.g., choices, reasons, and decisions) continued to dominate the discussion (Ushioda & Dörnyei, 2012). During the last 15 years, a shift toward more qualitative investigations provided rich insights into language teaching and learning (Dörnyei & Schmitt, 2001; Li & Duff, 2008; Ushioda & Dörnyei, 2012).

Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that, to date, second/foreign language learning motivation research has focused predominantly on the motivation to learn another language in non-language degree contexts. For example, Zhang (2013) investigated the attitudes of CHL learners studying Chinese as an elective module at a British university. Lu and Li (2008) conducted a comprehensive comparative analysis of the effect of integrative, instrumental, and situational motivation on Chinese learning of heritage and non-heritage college students enrolled in Chinese language classes in mixed classrooms in the United

States. These authors (Lu & Li, 2008) made a finer distinction between non-heritage Asian students (e.g., Korean learners of Chinese language) and non-heritage non-Asian students: their results demonstrated the diversity within both the heritage and the non-heritage learner subgroups.

As with the above-mentioned studies, previous motivation research on CHL learners offered valuable insights into this group of students as well as Chinese language teaching in general. Nonetheless, research regarding CHL learners as degree students of Chinese remains scarce. Because choosing to study Chinese as a university degree entails a significantly greater commitment than learning the language as a study module, the stakes are generally higher for these students.

Regarding degree choices, although there is a substantial body of research on minority ethnic access to higher education, there is "much less work done on minority ethnic students' experiences of higher education and almost none" on these students' choices in higher education (Ball, Reay, & David, 2002, p. 333).

The aim of the study is, therefore, to address this gap of understanding by launching a qualitative investigation into both CHL learners' motivation for choosing to pursue a degree in Chinese and the specific challenges that they face.

Method

This study takes a data-driven approach that uses open-ended questionnaires and interviews to explore 1) why Chinese-heritage undergraduates decide to pursue a degree in Chinese, and 2) what specific challenges they face during their course of study. Although these learners are a minority group in the UK's Chinese-degree student population, considering the ongoing Chinese language deficit in British society and the enormous benefits that heritage language speakers can bring, the lack of information about CHL students pursuing a degree in Chinese is rendered significantly more serious. This study attempts to explore this previously unexplored group of British university students.

The study participants included 20 CHL learners who graduated with a degree in Chinese within the past four years or who were final-year students enrolled in Chinese degree courses at two British universities. The two groups were chosen for three reasons. First, the final-year students have had a relatively complete experience of studying for a degree in Chinese, which included a year abroad in China. These students and the recent graduates are both likely to have a more holistic perspective of the subject than first- or second-year students. Second, many CHL learners have unambiguously stated that the final year was the most difficult for them. Therefore, it is crucial to consider this fact in the investigation of the difficulties that they faced. Third, although it is always difficult to contact students after they have graduated, in this study, they are a critical group of participants since they appear to be both more open to criticizing the staff and university and more willing to discuss sensitive issues than the current students are.

The questionnaire consisted of open-ended questions about participants' reasons for learning Chinese at the university degree level and the difficulties that they encountered in doing so. Questionnaires were sent via email to 25 Chinese heritage graduates and final-year students of Chinese. In the email, they were informed about the confidential and voluntary nature of the study. Twenty recipients returned the completed questionnaire. It included questions about their ethnicity, place of birth, native languages and dialects, as well as those spoken by their parents and siblings, factors that they think most influenced their decision to study Chinese at the university level, and the difficulties and advantages that they believe they had in learning Chinese.

After the responses were thematically analyzed using NVivo, qualitative research software, all of the participants were invited to a follow-up interview. Although five agreed to be interviewed, one withdrew for personal reasons in the middle of the study. The interview transcripts and the survey responses were further analyzed around the common themes of motivations and challenges.

In addition to speaking English as their mother tongue, all 20 participants were characterized by the ability to speak a variety of Chinese dialects (e.g., Cantonese, Hakka, or Mandarin). They all indicated that both parents were native speakers of a variety of Chinese dialects and they all claimed a Chinese background as their ethnic heritage. All of the participants were British citizens. Pseudonyms were assigned to the participants who took part in the follow-up interviews. To anonymize their identity, other participants were referred to by their identified native Chinese language/dialect.

Results

Motivations for Pursuing a Degree in Chinese

All 20 participants were second-generation Chinese born in England. Among the varieties of Chinese, 14 participants identified only Cantonese as their mother tongue, four identified only Hakka, and two identified both Cantonese and Mandarin. They all learned Mandarin in their Chinese degree programs. In fact, only Mandarin courses were offered in their major course of study; the participants were fully aware of this fact when they chose the degree program. Consequently, it was particularly interesting to examine the main factors that affected their decisions to major in Chinese at the university level.

As noted earlier, one of the two central aims of this qualitative study is to fill the gap in the understanding of why CHL students choose to pursue a degree in Chinese. Overall, their answers to the open-ended question, "What factors do you think most influenced your decision to study Chinese as a degree at university?" indicated that they generally had *multiple* motivations for their choice of major and the instrumental and integrative orientations were not dichotomous.

Five distinct, albeit interrelated, categories emerged from a grounded thematic analysis of the data: getting back to ethnic/cultural roots (10 mentions, 50% of the respondents), better job prospects (9 mentions, 45%), a passion for Chinese popular culture (7 mentions, 35%), ease of learning (3 mentions, 15%), and parental recommendation (2

mentions, 10%). It is noteworthy that many participants identified more than one category of the factors.

First, although they were all native speakers of Cantonese, half of the respondents (ten) mentioned connecting with ethnic/cultural roots as one of their main reasons for deciding to pursue a Mandarin-oriented degree in Chinese. Even though they were not native speakers of Mandarin, they still regarded learning Mandarin as a way to connect with their ethnic and cultural roots. In the follow-up interviews, the participants pointed to the status of Mandarin as a national and standard language of China and the fact that it is the closest to their own language and culture, which echoes the findings regarding university-level CHL learners in the United States (Lee, 2005).

Second, nearly half of the participants (nine) claimed better job prospects as one of the factors that most influenced their decision. "Sophie" elaborated that "Chinese has become a new popular language as China's economy is growing, resulting in better job prospects" (Interview #4). Other interviewees talked about global companies desperate for Mandarin speakers and that Chinese companies were expanding globally and thus in need of bilingual employees as well. This is consistent with prior research findings about CHL learners' instrumental motivation for attending Chinese language classes in general (e.g., Comanaru & Noels, 2009; Mu, 2016).

Interestingly, 35% of the participants (7 out of 20) cited a passion for Chinese popular culture as one of their main reasons for choosing to pursue a degree in Chinese. Five indicated that, despite being British citizens, they were surrounded by Chinese popular culture. Three further specified familiarity with Mandarin popular culture, such as Chinese programs produced on the Chinese mainland and in Taiwan. "George" explained that "Many Mandarin drama and TV shows are increasingly popular and more engaging than Cantonese shows" and then he gave examples of Mandarin variety talk shows and game shows that can be watched for free online (Interview #3).

Two participants extended the scope from Chinese to Southeast Asian popular culture. Both touched upon Korean TV shows. As "Maria" expounded in her follow-up interview, ". . . my passion in Southeast Asian culture. I really enjoyed watching Korean television and films, which were dubbed in Chinese, and listening to Chinese songs [online]" (Interview #1). The comments reflect the interconnectedness of cultures in Southeast Asia and the global spread of pop culture, facilitated by the Internet and unencumbered by time and space. While the influence of pop culture has been explored among English-as-a-foreign-language learners (Cheung, 2001), its study is rare within the CHL context, and it may be seen as an emerging trend. The discussion section below addresses this point.

Fourth, three participants (15%) claimed ease of learning as one of the main motivations for their degree choices. All three were native speakers of Cantonese. When probed in his follow-up interview, "George" elaborated that he could master Mandarin quickly because of his knowledge of Cantonese, and he really wanted to "learn it well and use it in [his] future" (Interview #3). Describing how hard he worked for his degree and how much culture shock he experienced during his year abroad in China, he went on to stress that it was not because he wanted to earn an easy A (Interview #3). While his elaboration indicates a connection between the motivation regarding ease of learning and the motivation related to future career opportunities, it may also lend support to previous observations that CHL learners tend to be "simply dismissed as 'native speakers' who do not need any instruction or are viewed derisively . . . as people seeking inflated grades" (Li & Duff, 2008, p. 15). This seems to overshadow the genuinely positive motivations for learning on the part of these students.

Fifth, two participants cited parental recommendation as one of the factors that most influenced their decision to pursue a degree in Chinese. The mother tongue of one was Hakka and the other's was Cantonese. The Hakka speaker referred to his parents' background in international trade and their belief that Mandarin skills would enable him to realize his dream

of running his own business. "Lisa," the Cantonese speaker, articulated her parents' thoughts about what jobs would suit her: "My parents thought that I was best suited to be a translator or interpreter in the future, so they encouraged me to further my Chinese studies" (Interview #2). Clearly, parental recommendations centered on their children's future career plans, which were also linked to the second motivation regarding job prospects. However, the perceived weight of parental involvement in the decision-making process seems to distinguish the two motivations. Although it is common to have parental involvement in students' choices regarding higher education (Reay, David, & Ball, 2005), its overriding impact on how the candidates chose their majors is what stands out here.

Challenges of University-Level Language Learners of Chinese Heritage

In the open-ended questionnaire, the participants were asked to answer two questions regarding the challenges that CHL learners face when studying at the university level: 1) "Compared with non-heritage learners, what difficulties did you have as a Chinese heritage learner in studying for a degree in Chinese at university?" and 2) "What difficulties do you think Chinese heritage learners can have in general? Why?" The participants' answers focused on the following aspects: greater pressure, success taken for granted, marginalization and neglect by teachers, and the distancing attitudes of fellow students.

Higher expectations, greater pressure: "You look like a native speaker." The majority of the participants reported feeling extra academic pressure as compared with non-heritage learners. They described feeling pressure from teachers, peers, and numerous others as well. For example, a native speaker of Hakka mentioned that people expected her to speak and understand at a certain level of Mandarin simply because she is Chinese and even though she had very little knowledge of Mandarin before she started her university studies.

"Sophie" illustrated this point by recounting a personal experience. She had been strolling around with her friends during the Chinese New Year celebration in the China Town of a British city. The streets were swarming with people, many of whom were not Chinese.

They had all gathered there for the Chinese New Year parade and to learn about Chinese culture. A white family—two middle-aged parents with a child—was standing next to Sophie and her friends. The father asked her about the meaning of a Chinese poster on the wall in front of them. After Sophie explained to the family that she could not understand the meaning of the words either, the father said, "Sorry, but you look like a native speaker." Sophie felt too embarrassed to explain that even though she was indeed a native speaker of a variety of Chinese dialects, she was actually studying for a degree in Chinese. As she explained, people may not be aware that "It is natural that you don't know everything about Chinese" (Interview #4).

This experience demonstrates that simply because an individual looks Chinese, people tend to expect him or her to be a native speaker of Chinese and to know everything about the language, thus placing higher, sometimes unrealistic, expectations upon the individual. In a similar vein, most participants also reported feeling the pressures of failing to live up to the expectations of teachers and peers and/or self-imposed pressures that they should succeed as heritage learners. For example, "There can be a dependency of non-heritage learners expecting Chinese-heritage Chinese students to be more competent with the language, therefore extra pressure to succeed" (a Hakka native speaker, questionnaire answer). These findings support prior research on CHL learners generally feeling more pressure than non-heritage learners regarding their Chinese language skills (Comanaru & Noels, 2009; Lee, 2005).

Success taken for granted: "Hard work overshadowed by views that you have an unfair advantage." The second major challenge that emerged from the findings was that others took the success of the CHL students for granted. This is somewhat related to the first challenge of feeling extra pressure. According to most participants, teachers and non-heritage peers generally thought that they "ought to succeed" (a Mandarin speaker, questionnaire answer) and they "failed to appreciate [their] efforts appropriately" (a Cantonese speaker,

questionnaire answer). For example, when probed about her questionnaire answer, "Your hard work tends to be overshadowed by views that you have an unfair advantage," recent graduate "Maria" offered an example of the issues that she and many other Cantonese speakers had with Mandarin pronunciation:

> I worked so hard to avoid my Cantonese accent popping up. But my teachers and classmates didn't notice my efforts at all. . . . When my non-heritage classmates got one sound right in a very difficult four-character idiom, they were highly praised by my teachers. But even though I got all four sounds right because I had spent much more time after class to learn a lot of idioms and practice myself, my teachers didn't praise me (Interview #1).

Mandarin has four tones (some say five, if the neutral tone is considered a tone); in comparison, many other Chinese dialects have more than that. Cantonese, for example, has six tones (nine, if the checked tones are included). It is noteworthy that the Chinese degree programs offered in this study in the UK did not have dual tracks in Cantonese and Mandarin, as is the emerging trend in heritage language education in North America (Kondo-Brown, 2010; Lee, 2005; Lu & Li, 2008). One of the reasons for this might be the relatively small number of heritage learners in Chinese program student populations.

In addition to tones, Maria mentioned other examples as well. For instance, she thought that her prior knowledge of very informal registers of Chinese actually became an additional difficulty with which she had to grapple when she learned formal registers at a more advanced level. Although she spent significantly more time addressing it than her non-heritage classmates, her extra efforts were neither appreciated nor acknowledged by her teachers, once again implying that her success was taken for granted.

One participant, native Cantonese-speaking "Lisa," held a view that was opposite that of the other participants:

I think Chinese-heritage learners won't be as hard-working as non-heritage learners because they think they already know it. However, sometimes things are taught which even the Chinese-heritage learners don't understand (e.g., idioms) and because they may not be as eager to learn as the non-heritage learners, then it may take them longer to fully grasp it (Interview #2).

Unlike the other participants, Lisa had a relatively good knowledge of Mandarin before she began her studies. Her heritage background, including her family's history of migration and settlement, is examined in the case study section. Her perspective on this issue was idiosyncratic in the data. Because their hard work was not valued appropriately and their success was expected, the CHL students tended to feel frustrated during their studies.

Marginalization and neglect by teachers. The third specific challenge that the CHL students faced was marginalization and neglect by teachers. Although less than half of the participants (7 out of 20) mentioned the issue, it appeared to be a serious problem, as shown by Maria's comments below:

Some teachers would *discriminate* [against] us [as compared to] … non-Chinese-heritage learners, which is rather discouraging. Since they believe we have an unfair advantage, they tend to neglect us in the classroom. For example, when going around the class to answer questions, they would naturally skip our turn every single time. Whilst studying year 2 material, I was once told to reduce the quality of our paired role-play work [my emphasis] (Interview #1).

This extract vividly depicts what the participants found particularly challenging during their studies. While the others did not use the word "discriminate," they reported feeling upset and frustrated at being neglected and marginalized by some of their teachers. Several mentioned being asked to reduce the quality of their paired work and were told that they should do so because their non-heritage partners could not compete with them at the same level. However, the CHL students seemed to view it in a different way. They thought that when working in

pairs of mixed ability, they could "push their partners to achieve better scores" (George, Interview #3).

All seven of these participants reported that some of their teachers behaved differently toward heritage versus non-heritage students in classroom interactions and this seriously affected the students' motivation to learn the language. For example, many of the teachers deliberately shunned the heritage students in class and these students found it "very difficult to bring up the problem to the teachers" (Maria, Interview #1). This is a significant issue because they did not want to be regarded as troublemakers or seen as "not respecting teachers" (George, Interview #3), which is extremely important in traditional Chinese culture.

Distancing attitudes of fellow students. The fourth main challenge identified by the CHL students was their non-heritage classmates' *distancing* attitudes in the use of the Chinese language as the medium of communication. Although the participants all got along with their non-heritage peers very well, they reported that their non-heritage classmates continuously avoided talking to them in Chinese since they were usually "not very confident with their Chinese language skills" in front of their heritage classmates (a Cantonese speaker, questionnaire answer). Lisa thought, "they felt a bit intimidated" (Interview #2). Because of their perceptions of their classmates' distancing attitudes in this regard, the heritage learners did not speak frequently in Chinese to their non-heritage classmates. Maria described this vividly and offered a few examples of when she did speak Chinese:

> I rarely speak Chinese with my classmates, but when I do, it is usually rather brief. It would never be a full-on conversation like the one we would have in English. For example, we would call each other's Chinese names, 你好！怎么了？你在哪儿？
>
> etc. The response would also be brief, or even just in English (Interview #1).

The extract above shows that the communication in Chinese between heritage and non-heritage students tended to be very simple and brief, such as "'How are you?" "What

happened?" "Where are you?" Whether explicit or implicit, the unwillingness of non-heritage peers to use Chinese with the heritage learners also seemed to have an adverse impact on the heritage learners. They found this difficult to deal with, since their non-heritage peers might be more likely to talk to each other among themselves in Chinese, which was "discouraging," since they "were all Chinese learners" (a Cantonese speaker, questionnaire answer).

Further Background of the Participants: Four Cases

The follow-up interviews with four out of the 20 participants allowed me to delve further into the questionnaire answers and engage the participants in their "personal stories of migration and settlement," which is vital in studying heritage learners (Comanaru & Noels, 2009, p. 154). The aim of this section is to allow the reader to gain a fuller picture of the diversity of this student population and to explore the genesis of their views and motivations.

Case one: Maria. Maria graduated with a First Class Honors degree in Chinese in 2014. Born and raised in Buckinghamshire, she identified herself as a native speaker of English first, followed by Cantonese. Her mother spoke Cantonese, Vietnamese, Mandarin, and English while her father spoke Cantonese, Hakka, and English. English and Cantonese were spoken at home among her family members. Both of her parents were ethnically Chinese.

Maria's father came to the UK from Hong Kong to join his family in 1978. He opened his own restaurant and sold it upon retirement in 2012. On her mother's side of the family, Maria's uncle had fled as a refugee to the UK from Vietnam. After settling down, he acted as a guarantor for her mother and the rest of their family to migrate to the UK. Her mother and father have been working together ever since.

Maria regretted that her Cantonese was not very fluent. Her parents were very busy with work as she and her brother were growing up. Since her family did not enforce a Chinese-only policy, she and her brother used English much more at home.

Case two: Lisa. A recipient of a First Class Honors degree in 2015, Lisa was born in south England and grew up with her grandmother and mother, who did not speak any English. Her first language was Cantonese, as it was the main language they spoke at home. On starting primary school, she had a Cantonese-English interpreter to help her for about two years. Since she spent a significant amount of time at school and around English-speaking children, she soon became fluent in speaking English.

Her father came to England with his family at the age of 11. He studied in the UK at a college and polytechnic institute. Her grandmother worked at fast-food restaurants and grew bean sprouts to sell to support her father's education. After earning a degree in engineering, her father worked for British Airways for a couple of years. Later, he moved to the Sony Company and started making numerous business trips to China. Perhaps because he did not learn Mandarin until he started traveling on business to China, from the start, he took Lisa's Chinese language education very seriously (Interview #2).

Lisa was the only participant who had a good knowledge of Mandarin before she started her undergraduate studies: as proof, she had a General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) in Chinese. She was the only participant who thought that heritage learners were not as hard-working as non-heritage learners were. Her main reason for choosing to pursue a degree in Chinese was her parents' recommendation: they thought that a job as a translator/interpreter would suit her best. Both of her parents were native speakers of Cantonese.

Case three: George. Born and raised in London, George graduated with an Upper Second Class Honors degree in Chinese in 2015. Both of his parents were Vietnamese Chinese, speaking Vietnamese, Guangxi Cantonese (a variety of Cantonese spoken in part of the Guangxi Province), Mandarin, and English. They emigrated from Vietnam to the UK over 30 years ago and worked in textiles and catering. Earlier still, George's great grandfather, on

his father's side, had emigrated from Southern China to Vietnam. George identified English and Cantonese as his native languages.

In addition to speaking those languages with his parents at home, George identified "watching Chinese programs" as one of the factors that he thought most influenced the way in which he spoke Cantonese and Mandarin. As the description in the previous section demonstrated, he also claimed Chinese popular culture as one of the main reasons for his degree choice.

Case four: Sophie. Unlike the previous three interviewees who had already graduated, Sophie was a final-year student of Chinese. She was born and raised in Liverpool, where the Chinese community was relatively large. Her native languages were English and Hakka. Her parents came to the UK to get married and work 28 years earlier. Her mother spoke Hakka, Mandarin, Cantonese, and English. Her father spoke Hakka, Vietnamese, Cantonese, and English. Her parents raised her and her sister to speak Hakka at home, while they learned and spoke English at school. Attending weekend school was critical to improving her Cantonese fluency when she was younger.

Sophie also found it challenging that although she "already had knowledge of speaking Hakka and mild Cantonese, the different dialects could be confusing and easy to mix up at times" (Interview #4).

In summary, these four case studies illustrate the individual differences between heritage learners. I will address this point in more depth in the discussion below.

Discussion

Regarding the CHL students' motivation to pursue a degree in Chinese, the findings of the present study are generally consistent with the results of prior research regarding CHL learners not pursuing a degree (Lu & Li, 2008). Instrumental (e.g., better job prospects) and integrative motivation (connecting with cultural roots and interest in Chinese popular culture) are not mutually exclusive (Ushioda & Dörnyei, 2012) and can co-exist in the learners'

degree choices. To connect with their ethnic/cultural roots supports the findings of previous studies regarding ethnic related choices in higher education, in that, for some, the choice was "in part, about sustaining aspects of their ethnic identity or having this identity valued and defended" (Ball et al., 2002, p. 348).

A new finding is that, for some CHL students, their interest in popular culture was one of the main motivating factors that drove them to pursue a degree in Chinese. While almost none of them had visited China before beginning their studies, their engagement with current Chinese popular culture, such as Mandarin dramas and TV shows, was made possible by the Internet. This finding demonstrates that not only the past, or tradition, but also the current popular culture connects heritage learners with their cultural roots, which in turn facilitates the learning of their heritage language and culture.

Familial influence was less evident in the heritage learners' degree choices, which is consistent with prior research on young people's higher education choices in general (Brooks, 2003). However, this study concurs with that of Reay and colleagues (Reay, David, & Ball, 2005; Reay, Davies, David, & Ball, 2001) in that social class can play a significant role in the decision-making process. Although the case studies may provide some indications of the diversity of the participants' class background, this aspect requires further investigation.

The results of this study generally concur with the findings of prior research on CHL students' non-degree Chinese learning regarding the specific challenges that CHL students face while studying for their degree in Chinese (Lee, 2005; Comanaru & Noels, 2009). They experienced more pressure to succeed than non-heritage learners did and their academic success tended to be taken for granted.

Although the distancing attitudes of non-heritage students toward heritage students in mixed groups received significantly less attention in the previous literature, the findings of this study reveal that the two groups of learners indeed influenced each other's motivation in learning and using the language (Lu & Li, 2008, p. 90). The non-heritage learners seemed to

be intimidated when speaking Chinese at length with heritage students and the heritage students were likewise reluctant to engage in longer conversations with their non-heritage peers.

As for teacher influence on the students' motivation to learn in mixed classrooms, very little is known about teachers' marginalization and neglect of heritage learners. As Lu and Li (2008) pointed out, learners' continued interest, including that of heritage learners, is "highly dependent on how well the teacher motivates them to want to learn more about the language and culture" (p. 101). The behaviors of some instructors, including such things as skipping the heritage learners' turns, as mentioned by the participants, seemed to be extremely discouraging.

From the perspective of the teachers, it is increasingly difficult to deal with students with mixed levels and abilities in the same classroom. This is probably why programs of study in Chinese in both Canada and the United Sates have begun to provide dual tracks, such as "Chinese for Chinese" (Lee, 2005; Lu & Li, 2008). However, these dual-track programs have not yet been established for degree study in the UK, perhaps due to the smaller demand for the study of Chinese.[1]

Pedagogical Implications

The findings of the present study have three main implications for educating Chinese heritage students in a university context. First, the results show that some teachers tend to marginalize or neglect heritage learners in mixed groups, consciously or unconsciously. For effective teaching, one group of learners should not be preferred over another and there should be equal opportunities for all. The idea of creating cooperative, inclusive learning

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[1] One exception is the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) at the University of London. Its Chinese degree cohorts are usually larger than those of other British universities. It clearly states that its "BA Chinese also caters to the needs of non-beginners and/or heritage students, who are partly taught in special groups during the first year" (SOAS, n.d., p. 6). In the case of this university, dual track appears to be implemented at the basic level of language instruction.

environments (Lage, Platt, & Treglia, 2000) is also relevant to educating heritage learners in mixed group settings.

The second implication is the influence of current popular culture on heritage learners. The findings suggest that heritage learners are increasingly engaged with current Chinese popular culture, due partially to its spread over the Internet. It is, therefore, beneficial to consider expanding the curriculum (Kondo-Brown, 2010) to include a wider range of perceptions, products, and practices of the target culture. Learners may be informed about the current popular culture landscape, which may further motivate them to find out more about the language and culture that they are learning.

Finally, the findings have implications for the structuring of Chinese degree programs. In a British context, heritage learners and foreign language students are frequently merged into a single-track language degree program. The results of this study lend support to the call that originated in North America (Lu & Li, 2008; Lee, 2005) to offer dual, or multiple, tracks for language programs. It may be helpful to consider grouping learners with similar backgrounds and levels of ability in a similar track, in part because of the differences between heritage and non-heritage learners, but also because of the diversity within the heritage language learner subgroups (Kondo-Brown, 2005), which is also illustrated by the case studies in this research.

Directions for Future Research

In this chapter, the motivations for choosing a degree in Chinese and the specific challenges of students of ethnic Chinese backgrounds in the UK were examined. In addition to demonstrating the coexistence of both instrumental and integrative motivation, the findings highlight the influence of current popular culture on the degree program choice of heritage learners. As for challenges, analysis of the data reveals the distancing attitudes of non-heritage fellow students, the teachers' marginalization and neglect, and the fact that there is greater pressure to succeed while success is simultaneously taken for granted.

Although heritage language education is a new and emerging field (Trifonas & Aravossitas, 2014), heritage students studying for a degree in their heritage language remain an uncharted area of research. Preliminary insights into their choice of degree program and difficulties during study were obtained from analyzing their questionnaire answers and follow-up interviews. Clearly, more research is needed. This chapter concludes with a list of three potentially fruitful areas for future research.

- What are the heritage students' experiences during their year abroad in their heritage "motherland?" How do they navigate their identities between feeling "at home" and "abroad?"

- In longitudinal terms, what is the impact of the changing relational dynamics between heritage learners and non-heritage learners on teaching and learning in mixed groups? It would be beneficial to follow cohorts throughout the entirety of their course of study.

- What is the effect of dual/multiple track programs on language learning? How does it compare to single-track programs? How can we address the needs of different groups and develop appropriate and consistent curriculums?

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