A SOCIO-HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF CHINESE HERITAGE
LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS
in
THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
(Asian Studies)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
(Vancouver)

October 2010

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Abstract

Throughout Chinese-Canadian history, Chinese heritage language (CHL) education has always been a way to transmit linguistic and cultural knowledge across generations, to maintain communication among Chinese family members and other contacts, near and far, and to preserve Chinese culture and identity. Nevertheless, despite the great efforts made by many generations of Chinese immigrant communities to teach the Chinese language to Canadians from Chinese linguistic and cultural backgrounds in community schools, to date the ethnolinguistic vitality of Chinese language education in British Columbia, its role in history and society, and the factors that helped it survive and led to its current prominence have not been examined. This thesis describes the development of CHL education in BC, considering historical, educational, socio-political, and sociolinguistic factors that have shaped CHL education in society. The study draws upon archival data, including textbooks used at different periods of time, letters, school reports and journals, newspaper articles and other written documents, as well as oral interviews with current leaders and practitioners in Chinese language education in British Columbia. This research documents the various social-political influences on CHL education from both Canada and China during the tumultuous 20th century in particular, but also during current era. The study also reveals the significant role played by CHL education and advocacy during each period of Chinese-Canadian immigration history. The ethnolinguistic vitality of the local Chinese community has supported CHL education and inspired many people to learn Chinese as a heritage language in British Columbia. Finally, research on the benefits of heritage language education and maintenance are reviewed to provide an applied linguistic perspective on its proven efficacy, which complements the intuitive desires and beliefs of many generations of parents and community activists who have urged their children to keep the language alive. The
thesis concludes by noting some of the positive developments and remaining challenges associated with Chinese language education, teacher education, and pedagogy in both community and formal education settings in British Columbia in the 21st century.
Preface

One of the longest-established and largest ethnic groups in Canada is comprised of people of Chinese descent and Chinese heritage language education has become a significant trend in North American over the past two decades. For example, at the beginning of the 21st century, there were around 200 Chinese community schools operating in BC. Being a Chinese Canadian and a mother of a Chinese heritage language learner, I was interested in finding out where this level of enthusiasm and support have come from and whether the recognition of the value of CHL education has always existed in BC.

The historical data in this thesis were mainly drawn from the work of several leading scholars in the field, such as Donghai Lee’s (1967) *A history of Chinese in Canada*, Harry Con, Ronald J. Con, Graham Johnson, Edgar Wickberg, and William E. Willmott’s (1982) *From China to Canada: A History of the Chinese Communities in Canada*, and Peter S. Li’s (1998) *The Chinese in Canada*, as well as some major researchers in the field of Chinese Canadian history, e.g., Mary Ashworth, Patricia Roy, Timothy J. Stanley, etc. The interviews were semi-structured since I tried to ask questions from the basic level to allow the interviewees to elaborate on their personal experiences. Their time and contributions to this study are greatly appreciated. Finally, this thesis would have never become a reality without the vital support from my supervisors Dr. Duanduan Li and Dr. Patricia Duff.

This study has been approved by the Behavioural Research Ethics Board (BREB) at the University of British Columbia (Ethics Certificate number: H10-00806).
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Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deepest thanks to my supervisors Dr. Duanduan Li and Dr. Patricia Duff, who introduced me to the field of language education and taught me to become passionate about it. Thank you for your invaluable encouragement, guidance, support and patience throughout my study. I also want to extend my sincere thanks to Dr. Henry Yu, for his generous help, insightful comments and his precious time. It has been a great privilege to work under such a knowledgeable and supportive committee who truly care about the success of their students.

I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the Chinese Canadian Historical Society of British Columbia and the Edgar Wickberg family for their valuable financial support on this project. I would also like to thank Phoebe Chow from UBC Asian Library for her tireless support in helping me dig out historical records, and thank the librarians, Eleanor Yuen and Jing Liu, for their great suggestions. Special thanks go to my dear friend, Feng Zhang, for sharing his thoughts and providing important references in the relevant area. I wish to take this opportunity to also thank the four interviewees for sharing their stories and thoughts.

Many thanks go especially to my brother, Yi Jiang, for his great understanding and support of my study, and to my father-in-law, Deling Chu, I wouldn’t have come this far without all his continuous encouragement and financial assistance. A million heartfelt thanks go to my husband and lifelong friend, Hai Zhu, for his time and selfless support, and to my son, Tianbo Zhu, for his infinite patience and understanding.
To my father, Wenlong Jiang, my mother, Liang Chu, and my father-in-law, Deling Chu, who have always encouraged me to move forward.
Chapter 1

Introduction

One of the most important social and educational institutions established by immigrants in the United States is the Chinese heritage schools (sometimes known as community schools). Chinese heritage schools serve not only as symbol of Chinese identity and ethnic pride, but also as a bridge linking past to future generations. They are one of the most visible and vital speech communities where Chinese language and culture are practiced and accessible to students.

Wang (1999, p. 271)

1.1 Background

In Canada, Chinese is spoken by nearly a million Canadians as their home language and has become Canada’s third most widely spoken language after English and French. In British Columbia (BC), Canada’s westernmost province, Chinese represents the largest ethnic minority group (Statistics Canada, 2008). Chinese culture and language has had a tremendous influence for over 150 years in BC, especially in Vancouver, where Cantonese, Mandarin, and other dialects have been spoken and transmitted from one generation to the next by both established Chinese Canadian families and new immigrants. Nowadays, heritage language acquisition and maintenance have become an important educational priority in our increasingly globalized and diversified societies such as Canada’s, and the vitality of Chinese heritage language education, acquisition and use, and identity construction is strong evidence of this.

Nevertheless, despite the long history of efforts by Chinese immigrant communities to teach Chinese to many Canadians from Chinese linguistic and cultural backgrounds in Saturday schools or after-school classes, to date no research has been conducted on such endeavours in British Columbia from a socio-historical perspective. Furthermore, the role of Chinese as a heritage language in history and society has not been studied.
This research intends to provide a sociolinguistic and historical perspective of Chinese heritage language (CHL) education in British Columbia, especially in Vancouver. My main objective is to investigate the ethnolinguistic vitality of Chinese as a heritage language in BC and its role in history and society, by tracking the historical development of CHL education in BC. This thesis examines the immigration policies, ethnic identity considerations, public education policies and practices, and language ideologies and other such factors that have shaped the preservation and development of CHL education.

1.2 Purpose

Ethnolinguistic vitality (Giles, Bourhis & Taylor, 1977) refers to structural characteristics such as socio-economic status, demographic representation and institutional support pertinent to an ethnic group “which make a group likely to behave as a distinctive and active collective entity in intergroup situations” (p. 308). The higher the economic, social and socio-historical status of the ethnic group is perceived, the higher is the vitality of this group, and the more likely its language would survive in intergroup settings. On the contrary, groups that have little or no ethnolinguistic vitality were expected to assimilate linguistically or cease to exist as distinctive groups. Hornberger and Wang (2007) also point out that besides linguistic factors, heritage languages in a society are placed in a hierarchical order based on their real or perceived economic, political, and socio-historical and cultural relationships.

The status and evolution of Chinese as a heritage language in British Columbia provides a compelling example. Along with the history of Chinese immigration in BC, CHL education has evolved under the political, social and economic influences of both Canadian and Chinese governments. CHL education has existed in British Columbia for over 100 years. It has witnessed and experienced the most difficult moments in the history of Chinese immigration in
Canada. With all the ups and downs along this time line, CHL education survived and now thrives in today’s multicultural and globalized society.

Chinese immigrants can be divided into three groups depending on when they came to Canada. The first group came in the early 19th century and most of them were from the coastal areas in Guangdong province in southern China. They spoke Cantonese and wrote traditional Chinese characters. The second group came during the mid-to late-20th century and included many Taiwanese who spoke Mandarin and also used traditional Chinese written characters. The third and most quickly growing group has entered Canada from Mainland China during the past two decades and especially since 2000. They speak Mandarin but use simplified Chinese characters. This diversity in the Chinese community, reflecting both the history of Chinese immigration waves to Canada and the heterogeneity of Chinese societies, languages, and cultures, have greatly affected CHL education over time. As Con, Con, Johnson, Wickberg and Willmott (1982) point out, the Chinese population of Canada “is divided between those who came to Canada before 1923 and those who came after the great changes in regulations in the 1960’s” (p. 250). While the earlier Chinese immigrants comprised a large number of rural inadequately educated famers, many of the Chinese immigrants who came after the introduction of the Canadian immigration point system in 1967 were urban well-educated professionals. Regardless of the characteristics of the different waves of immigration, however, CHL education has played a significant role in Chinese Canadian communities.

At the beginning of the 21st century, for example, there were over 200 Chinese schools, 500 teachers and over 20,000 students attending Chinese schools in British Columbia (Kan, 2000). Some culminate in students taking provincial or international standardized proficiency tests in Chinese such as the BC Provincial Exams, BC Challenge Exams, HSK (Hanyu Shuiping
Kaoshi, the standardized Chinese Proficiency Test) developed in Mainland China and TOP (Test of Proficiency-Huayu) developed in Taiwan.

But has this level of enthusiasm, support and recognition of the value of CHL education always existed in BC? What have been the historical trends regarding CHL education in BC? What are the significant roles that CHL has played during each period in Chinese Canadian immigration history? What is the vitality of CHL education in this province and what accounts for this vitality? This study sets out to address these questions.

1.3 Research Methodology

To investigate the history of CHL education in conjunction with successive waves of Chinese immigration over the last several generations (since the early 20th century), in this thesis I adopt a policy perspective a historical perspective, an applied linguistics research perspective, and an educational practice perspective. The written data come from three main sources: published books, journal articles, and historical documents, including magazines, school reports and Chinese language textbooks. Some of these documents come from UBC Asian Library’s uncatalogued archives from private donors. For perspectives on how policies affected CHL education in British Columbia in the late 20th to early 21st century, I examined some top Chinese schools with the longest history and the largest numbers of students in the province. I trace the evolution of Chinese schools in BC and document their development in the history of the Chinese Diaspora in Canada and the political, social and cultural factors that affected the development of CHL education.

Furthermore, I interviewed four individuals, whose names are replaced by pseudonyms in this study, who have made great contributions to, or have been involved in BC’s CHL education. Among the four interviewees, Guo has been working at the Vancouver Public Chinese School,
one of the oldest Chinese schools in Canada, for over 30 years, and is one of the administrators of the school. He witnessed the growth and changes of traditional Chinese language schools under the influence of Canada’s multiculturalism policy and he provided a detailed description of the recent situation of the school. Lin is a certified former public school teacher and he currently works as a director of a university language program in BC. He was one of the people who helped implement Mandarin as an academic credit course in the BC public school system. Peng is a certified Mandarin teacher who has taught in public high schools in both Vancouver and Burnaby for ten years. She provided concrete examples and valuable insights regarding issues in Chinese language teaching in the public education system. Finally, Ming is one of the administrators of a relatively new (13 years) but well-known Chinese language school and she is also one of the leaders of BC Chinese Language Association. She offered her experiences in running a private CHL school in BC as well as comments on the importance of community and government support for CHL education in BC. These individuals were recruited through personal referrals, based on their reputation as knowledgeable leaders and teachers in Chinese heritage language education, and they kindly accepted my invitation to participate in this project.

By examining relevant historical documents and interacting with multiple first-hand witnesses of CHL education, I intend to provide a detailed account and better understanding of heritage language education and socialization in BC from the late 19th century through to the 21st century.

1.4 Organization of the Thesis

In this thesis, I follow the historical timeline of Chinese Canadian immigration and sketch the corresponding historical trend of CHL education in British Columbia. I also examine the significant roles that CHL has played during each period. Chapter 2, 3, and 4 are organized
chronologically, followed by Chapter 5, which provides a more applied linguistic analysis and rationale for heritage language maintenance. The thesis then concludes with Chapter 6. In what follows, I provide a brief synopsis of each chapter’s content.

Chapter 2 presents the early history of Chinese immigration in British Columbia, Canada. During the early period of BC’s CHL education, CHL functioned as a messaging tool, an alternative educational resource and a symbol of Chinese identity for many early Chinese immigrants. Chapter 3 focuses on the development of CHL education from the 1920s to 1970s. Like many other historical events, CHL education also experienced ups and downs. During this period, CHL was a means of survival for many Chinese Canadians. It was also greatly affected by Chinese and Canadian political changes on both sides of the Pacific Ocean. In Chapter 4, I study the maturation of CHL and its dramatic expansion during the past several decades. As the world becomes more globalized, Chinese language has become more popular than ever for both heritage and non-heritage learners. For many Chinese Canadians, the Chinese language has now become a source of pride and confidence. Becoming a legitimate part of BC’s public education system was a big step for CHL education, but at the same time, it is still a new program that needs more financial, curricular, and pedagogical support. In Chapter 5, I discuss the importance and advantages of HL education, based on relevant literature and research in applied linguistics. I conclude my thesis with Chapter 6, providing some suggestions for future research in CHL education. I hope by examining the significant historical roles that CHL has played in BC, my research will provide a better understanding of some central, enduring political and societal issues at the forefront of CHL education, such as ethnic identity, public education, and policy making, for people who are interested in this topic and people who care about heritage language education.
1.5 Significance of the Thesis

At this important juncture, with Chinese becoming a more powerful global language, both locally in BC communities and internationally, it is very important to document its history and the various factors affecting its vitality in education and in society for the past 150 years. CHL is particularly fascinating, too, because of the multiple varieties of oral and written Chinese and because of the social and political meanings associated with those different linguistic forms. For example, whereas Cantonese was the most widely taught and was one of the most commonly spoken varieties of Chinese in BC historically, the current trend has been for Mandarin to replace (or supplement) Cantonese instruction and, increasingly, for written orthographies associated with Mainland China, rather than with Hong Kong or Taiwan, to replace or supplement instruction in traditional characters. This thesis provides the first detailed account of some of these developments and tensions: the political influences from within and outside Canada that affected Chinese language education here, an original exploration of some significant archival documents from different historical periods, and a perspective on current and future trends with respect to Chinese language education for the Chinese Canadian community.
Chapter 2

The Emergence of CHL Education in British Columbia (1880s - 1920s)

2.1 Introduction

The 150th anniversary of the establishment of British Columbia as a Crown colony was celebrated in 2008. That year also marked the 150th anniversary of the first group of Chinese immigrants settling in British Columbia (Yu, 2008). To many people, immigration generally is a means of searching for a better economic life and possibilities (Borjas, 1991, 1993), and the experience of the Chinese Diaspora is no exception.

In this chapter, I describe the first wave of immigration from China and California to British Columbia more than a century ago, explaining their reasons for coming to Canada, their early employment activities, and the demographics of the local Chinese Canadian community, including the regions they came from and the dialects they spoke. I then describe how and why the earliest Chinese education programs were established in the province, the teachers who were hired, the teaching materials that were commonly used, and issues around race-based segregation versus integration of Chinese children in (English) local public schools.

2.2 The Early Chinese Immigrants in British Columbia

According to the leading scholar in the field of Chinese Canadian history, Donghai Lee (1967), immigration from China to Canada dated back as far as 1858, when gold was discovered along the Fraser River in British Columbia. During the Gold Rush decade, thousands of Chinese prospectors arrived in Victoria from California and China, in search of a brighter future in the new world known as *Gum San* (Gold Mountain). By 1863, among 7,500 residents on Vancouver Island, over 4,000 were Chinese, representing 10% of BC’s population (Lee, 1969).
In 1871, British Columbia joined Canadian Confederation on the condition that a transcontinental railway would be built to connect BC with eastern Canada. Later, the Canadian government decided to import Chinese laborers to reduce costs since the construction companies were able to pay only one-fifth of what it cost for a white worker for the same work (Holland, 2007). Between 1881 and 1885, over 17,000 Chinese immigrants were engaged in the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) construction, and over 10,000 came to BC directly from China (Con et al., 1982). The majority of these Chinese originated from Siyi (四邑) and Sanyi (三邑) areas in Guangdong province so they generally spoke Taishan or Hakka dialects, and most of them were poor rural peasants and had to borrow money for the fare (Jianada Weiduoli Zhonghua Huiguan/Huaqiao Xue Xiao Chengli Qishiwu/lushi Zhounian Jinian Tekan, [Commemorating the 75/60 Anniversary of Chinese Association/Overseas Chinese School in Victoria, Canada, Special Issue, CCBA Special Issue thereafter], 1960; Lai, 1988; Stanley, 1990).

After completion of the CPR, the demand for cheap labor dropped sharply. Most Chinese laborers didn’t make enough to even pay for the return ticket to China, so many of them stayed in Canada, and unintentionally, began to compete with white workers on the job market. As a result, the white working class became hostile towards the Chinese workers (Ashworth, 1979; Holland, 2007; Roy, 1989; Ward, 1978). In 1885, the Canadian government passed the Chinese Immigration Act and placed a $50 head tax on each Chinese immigrant. The head tax was raised to $100 in 1900 and to $500 in 1904. This policy barred Chinese immigrants’ wives and children from coming to Canada, creating a “married-bachelor” society in the local Chinese community with a female-male sex ratio of 1 to 82 in 1885 in BC (Con et al., 1982).
2.3 The Emergence of CHL Education in British Columbia

2.3.1 Sishu (私塾), the Earliest “Home School” of CHL

During the late 19th century, the Chinese community in BC consisted of a small group of rich merchants, a relatively larger group of small business owners, and a much larger group of male laborers. Only the rich merchants were able to bring their wives and children into Canada, but many small business owners and numerous laborers lived in Canada as single males who were supposedly responsible for sending money back to their families in China (Con et al., 1982).

Prior to 1884, the rich Chinese merchants had already started to employ teachers from China, establishing family-based sishu (私塾, private classes, more like a home school with a private tutor) to educate their children. In 1885, the Report of the Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration shows that eight Chinese were categorized as “school teachers” in BC and they were scattered in Victoria, New Westminster, Wellington and Nanaimo. These early Chinese “home schools” were usually run in the rich merchants’ houses or shops, and the teachers generally were also the shopkeepers. They taught children Sanzi Jing (三字经, Three Character Classic---one of the Chinese classic texts as the embodiment of Confucianism suitable for teaching young children), letter writing, and some mathematical skills after business hours (Lee, 1967).

2.3.2 Victoria: The First Chinese School in Canada

During the CPR construction, the Victoria Chinatown started to thrive since it was the place where thousands of Chinese workers were able to gather together and reminisce about their lives back in China during Canadian winters when less work was available. However, various social issues, such as gambling, opium dens and prostitution, also emerged and lasted for
decades in many of the Chinese communities where married Chinese males lived alone in BC, while their families remained in China (e.g., Chong, 1994). In 1884, the Chinese merchants established the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA) of Victoria, which has played an extraordinary role in CHL education ever since.

After 1885, as Victoria Chinatown became more established, more families lived in this Chinese community. According to Lee (1967), at its peak, there were nine sishu (私塾, private classes) in Victoria, but they all belonged to the rich families. Children from ordinary families were financially unable to get their Chinese education.

In 1899, CCBA employed two teachers, and established the first Chinese public school Lequn Yishu (乐群义塾, Public Enjoyed Free School) on the third floor in the CCBA building. Here, “public” means that the school was open to the whole community, even for children from ordinary Chinese families. There was no tuition; all students attended the school free of charge. The funding mainly came from three sources: CCBA, donations from the Chinese community as well as the senior students’ opera performance fund raising. The curriculum, teaching and structure of Lequn Yishu were much the same as the schools in China at that time. The school was divided into a senior division and junior division, which were located on the east side and west side, respectively. The senior classes included Sishu (四书, the Four Books of Confucianism), Jingshi (经史, Classics and History) and Qianjiashi (千家诗, Myriad Poems), while the junior classes were taught Sanzi Jing (三字经, Three Character Classic), Baijiaxing (百家姓, Hundred Family Surnames) and Youxue Qionglin (幼学琼林, Primer for Children). A Confucius memorial tablet stood in the middle of the building. Every August 27 on the lunar calendar, the parents came with their children, bringing sacrificial offerings to the Confucius tablet and holding a memorial ceremony to celebrate Confucius’ birthday (Lee, 1967).
The end of the 19th century was also a time when China started the Reform Movement led by two prominent scholars and politicians, Kang Youwei (康有为) and Liang Qichao (梁启超). Kang came to Canada in 1899 and in the same year his followers established *Baohuanghui* (保皇会, Protect the Emperor Society). *Baohuanghui* founded a Chinese school *Aiguo Xuetang* (爱国学堂, Patriotism School) in Victoria in 1901 (Lee, 1969). Therefore, much of the curriculum was connected with Chinese moral education and classical Chinese literacy. However, because of the political changes in China, after several years of financial struggle and relocation, the school was unable to get enough support and was soon closed.

Some Chinese children started to attend BC’s English-medium public schools at the end of the 19th century. In 1901, of 108 school-age Chinese children, there were 16 Chinese students enrolled in public schools in Victoria, fewer than 15% (*The Colonist*, 1901, Feb. 14, p. 8). However, during the late 19th and early 20th century, there was a widespread notion that British Columbia (whose population was dominated by people of British descent) had been and should be a “white” province. Chinese people with their foreign customs were considered part of an inferior race and were severely discriminated against by White society (e.g., Con et al., 1982; Morton, 1974; Roy, 1989; Ward, 1978). Some Chinese children came to Canada during their early teens, and they typically had received no English language education beforehand. Besides their language problem, being an “inassimilable” race (see Chan, 1983; Chong, 1994), the over-age Chinese students created a perceived physical and moral threat to the White students in the local White society (Ashworth, 1979, p. 57). A segregated education for Chinese students was proposed in Victoria as early as 1901, and various excuses and continuous attempts were made during the following several years (Ashworth, 1979, Con et al., 1982; Roy, 1989; Ward, 1978). Despite the fact that far from causing problems, Chinese students were generally considered
obedient, attentive and studious (Stanley, 1990), the BC Department of Education decided to segregate Chinese students in both Vancouver and Victoria schools in 1907-08 (Ashworth, 1979; Con et al., 1982; Lai, 1987). The separate class in Vancouver was only applied to the over-age Chinese students who wanted to enter the junior grades (Ashworth, 1979). In Victoria, however, the school segregation was much more complex and serious. In 1907, after several meetings, the Victoria School Board decided to stop admitting all newly arrived Chinese children (Lai, 1987; Lin, 1960). This unjust policy was strongly rejected and protested by the Chinese communities throughout Vancouver Island. Having no choice, most Chinese parents sent their children to *Lequn Yishu* (乐群义塾, Public Enjoyed Free School), the only alternative education resource for many Chinese families (Lin, 1960). But the school was too small to serve over 50 students (Lee, 1969). At that point, funds were raised to hire a lawyer to take legal action against the segregation policy, but unfortunately the Chinese lost the case (see Ashworth, 1979). Then, the idea of using the remaining fund to construct a new CCBA building to hold a larger Chinese school was proposed (Lee, 1967).

As mentioned earlier, there were several private schools run by the rich Chinese families in Victoria during the 1890s, but the curriculum and pedagogy varied greatly. Therefore, a more organized and adequate Chinese school was needed. Also in 1908, the Chinese educational commissioner Liang Qinggui (梁庆贵) came to BC, bringing encouragement for Chinese language education from the Qing Emperor. The commissioner visited Chinese schools and promised Chinese governmental financial support to improve the school conditions (Lee, 1967). The most important impetus for this development was that the unjust school segregation created a strong concerted advocacy effort in the Chinese community to support Chinese language and culture education for their children. All of these factors functioned together and made the
establishment of a new Chinese school a reality. Subsequently the Chinese communities donated over $40,000 and in July 1909, the new CCBA building was completed and the new school started to operate (Lee, 1967).

On the day of the school’s opening, the Chinese consul-general from San Francisco came to host the opening ceremony. The leaders of Chinese communities from Vancouver, Coquitlam, and Surrey all came to show their support. BC’s premier, Victoria’s mayor and the head of the Education Department also attended. The strong community solidarity helped force the School Board to retract its policies (Con et al., 1982; Lee, 1967).

The new school, in fact a new version of Lequn Yishu was renamed Zhonghua Xuetang (中华学堂, Chinese School) and since 1912 it was changed into Huaqiao Gongli Xuexiao (华侨公立学校, Overseas Chinese Public School), the name that is still used today. It admitted the Chinese students who were rejected by the Victoria School Board because they were either non-native-born, lacking English proficiency or over-aged (Lai, 1987). It also included the children from previous Lequn Yishu (乐群义塾, Public Enjoyed Free School), Aiguo Xuetang (爱国学堂, Patriotism School) and several other private home schools as well as Xiehe Jiaohui Hanwenban (协和教会汉语班, Xiehe Church Chinese School) (Lee, 1967).

By 1914, Victoria’s Overseas Chinese Public School had 90 students and six classes including four senior classes for teenage students which were held in the evening, and two junior classes for younger children which were held during the daytime (Chinese Times, July 13, 1915, p. 1). The teachers were hired from China and the classes were taught in Cantonese. Even though most students spoke Chinese dialects such as Taishan or Hakka, the students would gain significant proficiency in Cantonese, which was then considered the standard Chinese variety in BC, by the time they graduated from the school (Chinese Times, July 17, 1915, 3; CCBA Special
15

Issue, 1960). In 1916, the Victoria Overseas Chinese Public School graduated its first class of 12 students and in 1918 it was registered with the Chinese Ministry of Education back in China (Lee, 1960).

2.3.3 Vancouver: Vancouver Overseas Chinese School

Chinese language education in Vancouver started a little later than in Victoria. In the decade starting in 1900, Vancouver began to surpass Victoria in importance and became the new commercial center of BC. As a result, it became a favourite residence for many Chinese (Lai, 1998). An increasing number of families brought their children to Vancouver as well, thus increasing the population of young Chinese. In 1912, Vancouver CCBA moved the long closed Aiguo Xuetang (爱国学堂, Patriotism School), which was originally established by the Chinese Reform Society Baohuanghui (保皇会, Protect the Emperor Society), into the CCBA building and changed its name to Huaqiao Xuexiao (华侨学校, Overseas Chinese School).

According to an overview of the school in 1944, the Vancouver Overseas Chinese School had a committee whose main duty was to gather financial support. The principal and the committee members were all unpaid volunteers. The instructors were hired with a one-year contract, and the full time instructors were not allowed to teach outside of the school. The school year was the same as that of the local public schools. The curriculum was adopted from China but modified according to Vancouver’s local situation. During the first several years, however, the school had only a few students. There was no tuition fee, and students were only required to pay a nominal membership fee of $6 per year (Wengehua Huaqiao Gongli Xiaoxue Gailan [Vancouver Overseas Public Chinese School Overview, VOPCS Overview thereafter], 1944).

In 1919, there were 210 Chinese families in Vancouver compared to 150 families in Victoria (Con et al., 1982). With an increased number of children, Vancouver Overseas Chinese
School developed into one of the two major Chinese schools in BC, with the other one being the Victoria Public Chinese School. Overseas Chinese education also caught attention of some scholars in China. In 1918, the president of Peking University Cai Yuanpei (蔡元培) led an education delegation to BC and inspected Chinese schools in Victoria and Vancouver (Stanley, 1990).

By 1923, there were 40,000 Chinese people in Canada, most of whom were in Western Canada. Although they only counted for 0.45% of the Canadian population (Con et al., 1982), their settlement in Canada broke the myth that they were sojourners. However, the fact that they were now entering professional careers threatened some people in the dominant society (Morton, 1974; Roy, 2003; Ward, 1978).

From 1908, school segregation for Chinese students had continued on and off in Victoria for over a decade (Ashworth, 1979; Lai, 1987; Stanley, 1990), but then had waned with greater integration of the Chinese population. In fact, in Victoria, the Chinese students had to endure a much longer, bitter struggle to fight for their basic right to education in whatever form. In September 1922, the Victoria School Board pulled all Chinese students out of their local schools, and planned to put them in a flimsy building near Chinatown (Lee, 1967). Although the board had no evidence to prove that all Chinese students were lagging behind as the board argued (Con et al., 1982), the segregation was solely applied to Chinese students, including Chinese Canadians who were born in Canada and had attended English kindergartens and represented up to 85% of the Chinese students attending Victoria schools (Lee, 1922). As a result, in 1922-23, “less than six Chinese students attended the public schools in Victoria, compared to 216 the previous year” (Stanley, 1990, p. 287).
The Chinese community once again strongly rejected and protested the segregation. The CCBA worked with other Chinese associations and established the Victoria Anti-Segregation Association (ASA) (Lee, 1967). The association organized a student strike and hired a lawyer to fight against this policy. In addition, the association made frequent contacts with the English media, sent messages to other Chinese communities across Canada and also sought help from the Chinese government. Later, ASA was informed by its lawyer that the legal dispute would be extremely difficult since the School Board had the legal right to determine the schools for the students and the Board also insisted that the segregation was not based on race (Lai, 1987).

After several unsuccessful negotiations, the CCBA added a school branch Zhonghua Yixue (中华义学, Free School for Chinese) inside Victoria Public Chinese School to provide education particularly for the segregated and on-strike Chinese students in 1922. The branch had seven teachers, including a white woman (Lee, 1967). The students were divided into two divisions, with a junior division for students 7 to 12 years old and senior division for 13 to 18 year olds. The curriculum included Chinese language, calligraphy, mathematics and English (Lai, 1987; Stanley, 1990). Once again the Chinese schools acted as the only alternative for the Chinese students who were rejected by the mainstream society.

In September 1923, under pressure from Ottawa, the Chinese government, local churches, and Chinese communities, the Victoria School Board backed down and announced that all 200 Chinese students were to return to their original schools and the Board would only put 17 students who were indeed behind their peers in a separate classroom (Ashworth, 1979; Con et al., 1982; Lai, 1987).

Despite their success at defeating segregationist policies, Stanley (1990) points out that the Chinese schools were actually much safer for Chinese girls than the public schools. He cited
an incident from the pre-integration period that was reported in the Vancouver local newspaper *Chinese Times* in 1915, in which a Chinese school girl was stoned by several white boys and severely injured and had to undergo major surgery to save her life. As Stanley concludes, since “racist violence was certainly a constant reality confronting Chinese students in the white public school” (also see, Chong, 1994), it is fairly easy to see why the classes for little children in Chinese schools were always during the daytime and the parents were more likely to put their daughters into Chinese schools even after they were permitted to integrate their children in the public schools (p. 298). This phenomenon explains why in 1915, there were 62 boys and 28 girls in Victoria Public Chinese School, but there were 81 boys and only 17 girls (i.e. a much larger ratio of males) in the segregated English-medium public facilities that Victoria School Board rented on Fisguard Street near Chinatown.

2.4 The Important Roles of Early CHL Schools

Chinese schools performed important cultural, social as well as educational roles in early Chinese immigrants’ lives beyond language teaching or learning. They were not only a place for Chinese children to learn the “home” language in a “host” society but also an alternative educational program when Anglo-Canadian society became hostile and exclusive toward Chinese people. Most importantly, they were mother tongue discourse communities where Chinese cultural values and traditions were transmitted and ethnic identity was reinforced.

2.4.1 CHL Schools as Sites for Chinese Language, Literacy, and Culture Socialization

In the late 19th century, private *sishu* (私塾) and public Chinese schools all used Chinese education classics as their textbooks. The orientation to education was to teach children not only to become literate in their ethnic language, but also to learn their cultural values and traditions, and to maintain their ethnic identity. Figure 2.1, for example, shows the first page of the *Three
Character Classic used as a textbook in early 20th century, which was donated to UBC Asian Library by a Vancouver family.

Figure 2.1: The first page of Three Character Classic (三字经), (UBC Asian Library Archive). Translated by Author (6 characters each line (from 2nd column) in 3-character clusters, from top to bottom and right to left):

*Human beings are naturally kind at birth.
They have similar natures but different habits.
Their nature will deteriorate if they are not educated properly.
The right way to teach is to teach with absolute concentration.
Long ago Mencius’s mother moved to a good neighborhood for her son’s education...*

One important function of learning the Chinese home language was for families to be able to communicate with their relatives in China, since letters were the only way to send messages across the Pacific Ocean. For many early Chinese immigrants, Gum Sam, the proverbial Gold Mountain, was only a place to make their fortune but their home was always in China, which held their roots. CHL education was a way of facilitating communication across vast distances. Indeed, Letter Writing (尺牍, Chidu) was a main subject in many Chinese schools in British Columbia for many decades. Figure 2.2 shows textbooks used in the first half of the
20th century to support letter writing. The cover of one of the textbooks shows a mailman on a bike holding up a letter, which two enthusiastic Chinese Canadian children were excited to receive. Another image below, on the right, shows the front of an envelope addressed bilingually to the writer’s older brother in Singapore. The envelope also shows how the Chinese address is vertical, not horizontal, with lines (columns) from right to left, and the English horizontally from left to right and with country information last, unlike the Chinese version where the country and city comes prior to the street address.

Figure 2.2: The Letter Writing (尺牍, Chidu) Textbooks Used from 1920s to 1950s in Vancouver Public Chinese School, (UBC Asian Library Archive).

2.4.2 CHL as an Alternative Educational Resource and Venue

As I explained earlier in this chapter, the establishment of Chinese schools in both Victoria and Vancouver indicated the urgent need for Chinese language education as well as general education for immigrant families as the Chinese population increased in British Columbia. Although Chinese students started to attend BC’s public (English-medium) schools at the end of the 19th century, they were not readily accepted until at least two decades later, as was outlined above, because of their perceived foreign customs and their age status (being older typically) relative to their Canadian English-speaking counterparts. Thus the Chinese schools provided a crucial alternative for those rejected from Canadian public schools.
2.4.3 CHL as a Symbol of Chinese Identity: Community Engagement, Employability, and Patriotism

The racism in BC’s public schools was just one small example of nation wide racial discrimination in Canada, according Roy (2003). On Dominion Day, July 1, 1923, the Chinese Exclusion Act went into effect. Because of this policy, legal Chinese immigration to Canada was virtually terminated for the next two decades. As a result, the Chinese Canadian population declined but the rate of Canadian-born Chinese teenagers increased (Con et al., 1982). By 1931, around 75 percent of the Chinese adolescents were Canadian-born and among them, over 60 percent lived in BC (Con et al., 1982). From 1911, several shubaoshe (书报社, reading rooms) had been established in Vancouver. The reading rooms contained Chinese newspapers and books, and they also served as meeting halls. The youths’ interests in politics also stimulated the growth of reading rooms. At this point, with relatively increased occupational opportunities for the Chinese immigrant youth, Chinese language skills became as important as, if not more than, their English language skills, since their social relations were still largely limited to the Chinese community (B. Anderson, 1991). And because of the anti-Chinese sentiment in society, career opportunities outside the Chinese community were unavailable to them and that, too, pressured Chinese parents to have their children learn Chinese and to seek future opportunities in China, if necessary (Con et al., 1982).

The political changes in the 1920s in China also affected Chinese communities in British Columbia. The Qing dynasty had been overthrown and the Republic of China, led by the Chinese Nationalist Party, also known as Kuomintang (KMT, 国民党), was established in 1928. An important figure who influenced Chinese people both inside and outside China was the revolutionary pioneer Sun Yat-sen. He was one of the leaders who launched the prominent
Huanghuakang Uprising against the Qing Government and was also the first leader of the KMT. Sun’s *Sanming Zhuyi* (三民主義, Three Principles of the People), his philosophical treatise to make China a united, democratic and prosperous nation, profoundly influenced overseas Chinese communities and schools. For example, the Three Principles of the People was held as the ideology of Vancouver Overseas Chinese School and every March 29, the school would organize a memorial ceremony to pay tribute to the 72 Martyrs of Huanghuagang. Consequently, overseas Chinese schools were greatly influenced by Chinese patriotism (and nationalism) which became a major theme in many Chinese school activities, such as students’ publications, public speaking and opera performances (*VOPCS Overview*, 1944).

Harsh discrimination towards the Chinese community and the positive political changes in China helped promote CHL education. Originally, as mentioned earlier, Chinese Canadians mainly came from areas in Guangdong province in southern China. They spoke different Cantonese dialects, and their loyalties were mainly towards their county of origin (also see *CCBA Special Issue*, 1960; Lai, 1988). According to Stanley (1990), the rise of Chinese schools in British Columbia was in fact closely connected to cultural maintenance and identity reinforcement. Stanley points out that the racism in BC forced Chinese to form organizations, such as the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA), beyond the local level. These organizations utilized Chinese nationalism to unite Chinese communities to challenge white exclusion (Stanley, 1996). As a result, they “invented” (also see Stanley, in press) a broader common identity as Chinese than the county-based one that immigrants arrived with.

Furthermore, the “promotion of literacy in written Chinese was an important element in overcoming the barriers of dialect and home origin” (Stanley, 1990, pp. 295-296). In addition, racial discrimination also led to “a crusade for cultural maintenance. In the eyes of the
immigrants, children who had come to Canada and their local-born counterparts all needed to be taught the Chinese language and other cultural subjects because they were vulnerable to deculturation” (Ng, 1999, pp. 16-17). Therefore, Chinese schools inevitably cultivated patriotic and anti-racist ideologies (CCBA Special Issue, 1960; Ng, 1999; Stanley, 1990; VOPCS Overview, 1944; Wenqiang School Journal, 1985). Being able to read and write Chinese not only facilitated communication between Chinese Canadians and their family members, but also functioned as a tool to unify and to signal a collective identity as Chinese (Stanley, 1990; 1996; in press).

2.5 Summary

During the period from the 1880s to the 1920s, Chinese schools and CHL education emerged and grew in British Columbia. At the very beginning when rich merchants hired shopkeepers to teach children Sanzi Jing (三字经, Three Character Classic) and Letter Writing, CHL education was mostly a way to transmit Chinese cultural and linguistic heritage to BC’s affluent Chinese immigrants’ children for them to communicate with their families back in China and maintain ties to their ethnic roots across the Pacific Ocean. Then, beginning from 1901, when school segregation towards Chinese students continued on and off in Victoria and Vancouver, CHL education in Chinese schools became the only alternative educational programming for many young Chinese Canadians. In 1923, when the Chinese Exclusion Act went into effect, the harsh racism in BC forced Chinese people to invent a broader common identity as “Chinese” to come together to challenge white exclusionism. Thus, CHL education enabled Chinese people to overcome their different dialects and home origins, and to communicate in a common language. As a result, CHL became a symbol of “Chinese” identity.
Chapter 3
The Vacillations and Tensions in CHL Education (1920s - 1970s)

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter described some of the early social, political, and educational contexts and conditions giving rise to Chinese schools in which Chinese language and literacy skills as well as cultural and moral education were transmitted. This chapter describes various factors in the middle decades of the 20th century, coinciding with war and, that affected CHL education. To provide a first-hand perspective of some of those factors and conditions as well as their consequences for Chinese education, I include excerpts from narratives written by some key Chinese educators from that period of BC history.

3.2 CHL in BC during World War II

CHL Chinese schools in British Columbia suffered severe decline and neglect during the Great Depression in the 1930s and some of them eventually had to close because of a lack of financial support. The World War II brought even more difficulties to the Chinese communities and schools. Wanyou Lin, head of the teaching section, at Vancouver Overseas Chinese School, described their school situation during WWII in his 1943 annual report as follow:

There are not many books in our small library. During this war time, the Pacific Ocean is difficult to cross, so we are unable to get more new books (from China). We could only buy books from a Chinese book store in San Francisco. Last year, we bought over 40.

We are thinking about improving and enriching our equipment every-day. If we had enough money, it would be easy to add more apparatus, samples, and scientific teaching material. We tried our best.

Many students graduated, but we are unable to provide high school education due to the insufficient financial and teaching resources, and the place is too small. This causes students to discontinue their study. It also causes a pain in our hearts. This [high school] is always in our plans, and we hope to be able to bring it into the
reality in the future when the situation gets better (Lin, 1944, p. 84, Chinese in original; translated by author).

However, World War II, and especially the Second Sino-Japanese War, which intensely affected Chinese people’s material living condition, miraculously unified overseas Chinese communities. This in turn, greatly enhanced the status of the Chinese language, which was a symbol of ethnic pride as well as the language of Chinese public media (Choy, 1995, 1999). Even though the size of the Chinese community in BC was shrinking due to the 1923 Act (Li, 1998), CHL education survived and even thrived during the hard war time.

In 1938, to promote CHL education, the Chinese Ministry of Education (国府教育部) and Overseas Compatriot Affairs Commission (侨务委员会) had planned to establish an Overseas Chinese Education Association. However, because of the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War, it was delayed and was not established until 1941. In the same year, the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA) formed a branch of the Overseas Chinese Education Association in Vancouver. In the middle of the war, the association greatly helped to enhance the overseas Chinese people’s sense of ethnic identity by advocating patriotism in overseas CHL education. The goals of the association included promoting Chinese language education, conducting pedagogical research, monitoring Chinese education in Canada, helping Chinese schools register with the Chinese government, hosting Chinese language contests, and so on. Vancouver Overseas Chinese School, Mon Keang School and Victoria Public Chinese School were at the center of this association (Guan, 1960; Lee, 1967).

According to Yee (1988), some Chinese teachers were able to enter Canada under exemptions from the 1923 Chinese Exclusion Act and Wong Kown Fow was one of them. He worked as a teacher and principal at Mon Keang School from 1936 to 1969. He provided the following accounts about the CHL teaching in Yee’s (1988) Saltwater City (English in original):
You had to have enthusiasm to do the plays [dramas]…It took a lot from the students. But the students were older, they were high school students about to graduate, so it was easier to work with them. In those days many were still intending to go back to China, so the students were very attentive…

Officially we used Cantonese, but the teachers like me used half Cantonese and half Toisanese [台山话, a Cantonese dialect]. So it became a Wah Kew Wah [华侨话], an overseas Chinese dialect. Cantonese speakers were few at that time, even among the parents. So you could teach Cantonese, but if the parents spoke Toisanese, there was conflict (Yee, 1988, p. 89).

Students in CHL schools were very active during the wartime. They formed choirs, performed dramas and organized tea parties to support China. They also published over 90 essays in Chinese on themes about Chinese patriotism and anti-Japanese-invasion in the children’s columns in several local Chinese newspapers (Con et al., 1982; Lee, 1967). In Lin’s 1943 annual report referred to earlier, he gave a full account of students’ activities during WWII in CHL schools. An excerpt follows:

With assistance from the teachers and the teaching office, the student union organized various debating, public speaking and Mandarin contests among senior students. The school bulletin was published by the students once a month and we also published various special issues on important events: such as the memorial of the revolutionary martyrs, the youth festival fair, the National Day carnival, etc. The students were very actively and enthusiastically involved in these publications, which included not only writings, but also pictures and cartoons, all rich in content and high quality.

It is also very important to cultivate the children’s patriotic spirit. We taught them the current news reports and the stories about the heroic soldiers fighting for our country. These really inspired the children’s patriotism…Everyone made a great endeavor to carry on the Chinese national dignity, to help the students believe in the victory of our home country (Lin, 1944, pp. 88-89, Chinese in original; translated by author).

Figure 3.1 provides an example of three Grade 5 students’ essays published in 1944 that were connected with patriotism and anti-Japanese invasion sentiments. Two students’ essays are on a same topic: Do not Forget National Calamity on National Memorial Day,
while the other student’s essay (the left bottom corner) is about his/her reflection on the Huanghuaguang Memorial Day.

Figure 3.1: Three fifth grade students’ Chinese essays on the theme of “patriotism and anti-Japanese-invasion” selected in the 1944 Vancouver Overseas Public Chinese School Overview, (UBC Asian Library Archive)

3.3 The First Peak of CHL Education in BC

CHL education in Canada reached its first dramatic peak during the 1930s and early 1940s (Guan, 1960; Lee, 1967) due to a strong sense of consolidation within the Chinese community during the tumultuous war years. The number of students in Victoria Public Chinese School reached its highest point at 159 in 1940 (CCBA Special Issue, 1960). A survey in 1942 shows that there were 1483 students and 47 teachers in 26 Chinese schools scattered across 11
cities across Canada (Lee, 1967). Among them, Vancouver had eight schools with 640 students and 25 teachers. Victoria had seven schools with 405 students and 11 teachers. There were also schools in Nanaimo and New Westminster. Together, about 70 percent of the Chinese schools and over 75 percent of the teachers and students were in British Columbia.

3.3.1 The Victoria Public Chinese School

By 1930 the Victoria Public Chinese School already had an enrolment of 116 students (CCBA Special Issue, 1960). In 1931, the school was registered with the KMT government’s overseas Chinese Affairs Commission (Lee, 1960). Although the school was managed by CCBA and the principal was elected among the CCBA leaders, this position was only a nominal one without any definite duty. In 1938, the school hired a previous teacher Zhenxiong Lee to conduct actual leadership and administrative duties. Therefore the school became more organized (Lee, 1960). It soon became one of the leading Chinese language institutions in BC, and during the time when qualified Chinese teachers were scarce, many other Chinese schools employed its graduated students to teach at their schools (Lee, 1967).

3.3.2 The Vancouver Chinese Public School

In 1942, Vancouver Overseas Chinese School (温哥华华侨学校) was registered with the Overseas Chinese affairs Commission and changed its name to Vancouver Overseas Chinese Public School (温哥华华侨公立小学), also known as Vancouver Public Chinese School. The student enrollment increased from several dozens in 1933 to over 200 in 1944. Half of the students were drop outs from the public schools, and the other half were new immigrants who were highly literate in Chinese. By 1943, over 3,000 students graduated from this school in total and it became one of the largest Chinese schools in Canada (VOPCS Overview, 1944).
According to Lin (1944), Vancouver Public Chinese School adopted the Chinese elementary school curriculum and the classes were offered from Grade 1 to 6. All the students attended regular schools in the Vancouver School Board during standard school hours. The Chinese classes started from 4:30pm to 6:10pm for Grade 1 to 4, and from 7 pm to 9 pm for Grade 5 and 6. The Saturday schedule ran between 10 am and 12 pm. A typical timetable is shown in Figure 3.2. For all the graduates, besides obtaining a graduation certificate, each person also had a file saved in the Chinese Ministry of Education. If a student were to return to China, the school would issue a paper so that s/he would be able to attend any middle school (equivalent to Canadian high school) in China.

![Figure 3.2: The Time Table of Vancouver Public Chinese School in 1944, in *Vancouver Overseas Public Chinese School Overview* (1944).](image)

The instruction was mainly in Cantonese. The subjects for Grade 1 to 4 included Vocabulary, Mandarin (taught as *Guoyu*, national language), Elementary Knowledge (similar to
Social Studies in the Western curriculum), Script, Chinese Citizenship (similar to Personal Planning in the Western curriculum), Making Sentences, Reading and Writing. The senior levels (Grade 5 and 6) had some additional courses such as History, Geography, Essay Copying and Essays Writing from Memory, in addition to those mentioned above. The school also had vocabulary contests and music classes. Sample pages from the Chinese Citizenship Textbook taken from archival documents are shown in Figure 3.3.

![Figure 3.3: Chinese Citizenship (similar to Personal Planning in Western curriculum) Textbook Used in the 1940s Vancouver Public Chinese School. The headlines read: “I don’t eat indigestible food, and I don’t wear too tight or too loose clothes”, (UBC Asian Library Archive).](image)

With the large increase in student numbers in the 1940s, Vancouver Public Chinese School started to look for a larger building to relocate the school. However, due to the lack of the resources during the wartime, the plan was delayed. After the Second World War, a school preparatory committee was formed and over the years, with the great support from Chinese
community, the committee raised $70,000. Finally in 1954, the committee bought an old church and renovated it into a new school which was opened in August 1954 (Lee, 1967).

3.3.3 Mon Keang School (文强学校) and Other Chinese Schools

Besides two Public Chinese Schools in Victoria and Vancouver, another important Chinese school in BC was Mon Keang School (文强学校). According to Wenqiang Xuexiao Xiaokan (Wenqiang School Journal, 1985), the school was established in Vancouver in 1926 by the Huang Family Association, and named after one of the family’s ancestors, Wenqiang Taizu (文强太祖). In December 1927, the school graduated its first class, and in 1929, it added additional classes for its graduates to continue their Chinese language study. Even though the school was operated by the Huang family, it accepted students with different family names. In 1947, because of the rapidly increasing number of students, Mon Keang School added more classes and in September 1948, it opened its first high school division. Since it was run within a family association, its administrative structure was comparably simple and stable. For example, there were two family members holding a position as both principal and teacher for 14 years, which was extremely rare at the time. Over the years, Mon Keang School established a good reputation and became a pillar of strength to CHL education in BC.

In Vancouver, there was also Dagong Yixue (大公义学, Dagong Free Private School), established by a Chinese association Hongmeng Mingzhidang (洪门民治党, Hongmeng Democratic Party) in 1936. There was also Naimo Huaqiao Xiaoxue (乃磨华侨小学, Nanaimo Overseas Chinese School), and Erbu Huaqiao Xiaoxue (二埠华侨小学, Erbu Overseas Chinese School) in New Westminster (Lee, 1967).

The Japanese foreign invasion of China in WWII pressed the Chinese immigrant community to be morally strong. Also, after China and Canada became allies in WWII, public
sentiment towards Chinese slowly changed from unfavourable to more tolerant. CHL education, as a means to foster ethnic pride and patriotism, flourished in what I am calling its first peak.

3.4 The Decline in CHL Education during the 1950s and 1960s

The Canadian government made several changes in its immigration law from 1940s through the 1960s. In May 1947, the 1923 Chinese Immigration Act was repealed, bringing to an end 25 years of Chinese immigration exclusion. It was a great moment in Chinese Canadian history but the declining situation of the Chinese community in Canada still continued because Chinese immigration was still limited by other immigration laws which applied to all Asian immigration (Ashworth, 1979; Con et al., 1982; Li, 1998). It was not until 1967 when the point system was adopted that the Canadian government finally ended the long history of regulative discrimination against Chinese immigration, and it was this change that finally brought the Chinese Canadian society’s long years of decline to an end (Con et al., 1982; Li, 1998; Roy, 2007).

During these several decades, one of the most important factors that affected CHL education in British Columbia was the political power shift in China. After the Chinese Civil War, the Communist Party of China (CPC) took over the country and founded the People’s Republic of China in 1949. The previous KMT (Nanjing) government lost the battle and retreated to Taiwan. Starting in 1966, the violent Chinese Cultural Revolution brought political, economic, and social chaos to the country. As a result, few immigrants came from Mainland China during this period, but many urban well-educated Chinese migrated to Canada from Hong Kong and Taiwan (Holland, 2007).

Starting in the 1950s, CHL education in Canada entered its “down” period (Guan, 1960; Lee, 1967). The number of students decreased sharply, resulting in the closure of many Chinese
schools. The table (data come from Chen, 1950; Lee, 1967) below shows that during 1950s and 1960s, there were only 12 Chinese schools in Canada compared to 26 two decades earlier. In 1930s and 1940s with only 30,000 Chinese in Canada and even less Chinese children, over 1,500 students were going to Chinese schools. However, in 1960s, there were only 1,045 students attending Chinese schools among 80,000 Chinese Canadians and most of them were in British Columbia. With 230 students, Vancouver Public Chinese School was the largest in Canada at that time (Chen, 1950). In Victoria, among 300 Chinese families and 500 school aged children, only 100 were attending the Chinese schools (Lee, 1967).

Table 3.1: Comparison of CHL education between 1930s-40s and 1950s-60s (data come from Chen, 1950; Lee, 1967).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>Chinese Population</th>
<th>Chinese Schools</th>
<th>Chinese Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1930s-40s</td>
<td>≈ 30,000</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>&gt;1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950s-60s</td>
<td>≈ 80,000</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1045</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Many schools closed and some were only half operating. Only a few schools ran on a regular basis and the quality of teaching also deteriorated. For example, the Chinese schools in Nanaimo were closed by 1960, and among seven Chinese schools in Victoria, only three survived (Guan, 1960). In Vancouver, Vancouver Public Chinese School and Mon Keang School were the only ones left (Guan, 1960). Even the well developed schools had to face the harsh situation. For example, Victoria Public Chinese School had to rent out the school’s sports field from 1957 due to insufficient financial support (CCBA Special Issue, 1960). And one of the major Chinese schools in Vancouver, Dagong Yixue (大公义学, Dagong Free Private School), was unable to survive the financial hardship and closed in the 1960s (Lee, 1967).

One of the most important reasons for this decline was the confusion among Chinese immigrants about their cultural identity in relation to the different political regimes back in
China. The new (communist) China seemed to have shut its door to the world in 1949 after the KMT government moved to Taiwan and there was no diplomatic relationship between Canada and China. Furthermore, overseas Chinese Canadians had only limited understandings of the new Communist government in China. Then the dramatic and demoralizing Chinese Cultural Revolution in 1960s inevitability undermined many overseas Chinese people’s cultural identity (Ng, 1999; Woon, 1998). As a result, many Chinese Canadians, especially the young generation, shifted their identity from the distant Chinese culture and turmoil towards what had become the much more familiar local Western (Canadian) culture.

Also, in Canada, unlike before when different Chinese groups had come together with a common Chinese identity to fight against racial discrimination, the racism issue, although still present, was not as intense as in previous decades (K. Anderson, 1991). Unlike most earlier Chinese immigrants, whose ultimate goal was to return to China, many overseas Chinese in the 1950s and 1960s had changed their sojourner mentality and decided to stay in Canada due to the lack of confidence to the new Chinese government and the unpredictable situation in China (see Lee, 1960; Li, 1998). In addition, most immigrant Chinese families in the early 20th century lived in and around Chinatown, but from the 1950s, Chinese families started to spread out, living in many different districts, and going to Chinese schools was not as easy or necessary as before (Lee, 1967). As a result, the role of Chinese (especially Cantonese) as a common language to unify different Chinese groups became less critical and English became more important. For many Chinese parents, learning Chinese seemed not as urgent as before and the lack of motivation made parents reluctant to put their children into Chinese schools (Lee, 1967).

Eventually a “language shift” started in many Chinese immigrant families. According to Dorian (1982), if a language other than the ethnic language “proves to have greater value, a shift
to that other language begins” (Dorian, 1982, p. 47). Predictably, English was the language of educational, social and economic mobility in Western Canada, thus the shift from Chinese to English in Chinese immigrant communities and families seemed inevitable.

As Lee (1967) points out, at earlier times, with greater motivation and better attitudes, the students’ achievement in Chinese language and literacy was comparable to that of children in China. However, during the 1950s and early 1960s, students were much younger and many of them were born in Canada. They were mostly educated in English in Western schools. Therefore, many of them were Canadianized and their lives were becoming far removed from Chinese culture not only geographically but also socially, culturally, and politically. Furthermore, the CHL schools depended largely on community donations, but when the public didn’t have the enthusiasm for CHL education, the financial support naturally went down. This inevitability affected the teaching resources. Teachers’ salaries were extremely low so they would move to a better job whenever possible. Teaching staff changed frequently and teaching practices became less professional. Consequently, BC’s CHL education entered a static or deteriorating phase.

3.5 The Revival of CHL in BC

Beginning with the introduction of the Point System in Canadian immigration law in 1967, whereby applicants are awarded points for certain kinds of attributes, skills, abilities, and experience, and followed by the establishment of diplomatic relations with China in 1970 and Prime Minister Trudeau’s visit to China in 1971, international relations between Canada and China improved gradually. In China, after the ten-year Cultural Revolution, Deng Xiaoping’s “open door” policy in 1978 shifted the nation’s emphasis from political struggle to economic reconstruction. As a result, the better accessibility of Canada as an immigration destination and
the improved mobility of Chinese people enabled some people, especially scholars, to enter Canada during the 70s.

Because of the major change in Canadian immigration laws, 1967 was the dividing point in Chinese Canadian history which Con et al. (1982) characterized as “dualities”. In the late 1970s, besides the affluent investment immigrants from Hong Kong and Taiwan, well educated professionals and scholars from Mainland China started to enter Canada (Guo & DeVoretz, 2006; Holland, 2007). This dramatically changed the demographics of the Chinese communities in British Columbia. Meanwhile, the establishment of multiculturalism as a Canadian national policy in 1971 changed the Canadian attitudes and policies towards a more tolerant atmosphere which ensured the immigrants’ right to preserve and foster their first language and their culture (Kloss, 1977). The more relaxed political atmosphere in both Canada and China enabled BC’s Chinese community to revive its CHL education.

In addition to the major well-established Chinese schools, such as Victoria Public Chinese School, Vancouver Public Chinese School and Mon Keang School, some new Chinese schools started to emerge with the new immigrants. In Vancouver, under the direct influence of the nation’s multiculturalism policy, the Chinese Cultural Centre was established in 1973. Two years later, the Centre started to offer Chinese language courses. In 1979, Vancouver Chinese School of Taiwan Universities Alumni Association of Western Canada (台灣大專加西校友會中文學校) was established. According to the school’s second principal Qian (1995), the school started with 60 students and the classes were held in a community center. After long years of decline, CHL education in British Columbia had started to recover.
3.6 Summary

After the formal Chinese schools such as Victoria Public Chinese School, Vancouver Public Chinese School and Mon Keang School were established in the early 20th century, CHL education experienced great ups and downs mid-century. Although the outbreak of WWII severely damaged the material living condition in many Chinese communities, it also unified overseas Chinese people by stirring up strong Chinese patriotism and feeling of a shared ethnic identity. As a result, CHL education in Canada reached its first peak during the 1930s and early 1940s because of the strong sense of consolidation within the Chinese community during the harsh war situation.

However, the new Chinese Communist government isolated itself from the world and the Chinese Cultural Revolution (1966-76) greatly destabilized overseas Chinese people’s cultural identity. The new dilemmas associated with their cultural identity and motivation to maintain their heritage language and ties with Mainland China led to the lack of financial and moral support for CHL education. Consequently, CHL education in BC entered its “trough” period.

Nevertheless, the establishment of diplomatic relations between Canada and China, and Deng Xiaoping’s “open door” policy in the 1970s provided a more relaxed political atmosphere for Chinese immigrants. Furthermore, the establishment of multiculturalism as a Canadian national policy also offered a more favourable social context for the revival of BC’s CHL education.
Chapter 4

The Resurgence of CHL Education (1980s - 2010)

4.1 Introduction

Having explored the early emergence of HL education in earlier chapters, including its early peak in popularity at the turn of the 20th century, followed by its sharp decline in the midst of the social, political, and economic turmoil in the middle of the 20th century, in this chapter I focus on the current rapid expansion in CHL education in British Columbia and possibilities for the future.

The previous historical account came primarily from written historical documents. However, for more recent trends in CHL and to better understand some of the factors affecting CHL program development that have not entered the historical record yet, I conducted hour-long interviews with several key Mandarin education leaders representing the many Chinese language professionals currently active in the province and representing different educational levels or sectors (e.g., k-12 public schools, postsecondary programs, and community schools). These interviews shed light on some of the issues that define this period of CHL history and development, including the adoption of Chinese language courses in BC’s public education system, and the shift from Cantonese to Mandarin and from traditional scripts used in Taiwan and Hong Kong to those used in Mainland China, in some cases, based on the growing importance of China (and thus simplified Chinese characters and pinyin) in terms of global economics, as well as recent immigration patterns.

Excerpts from these interviews are included in this chapter. Pseudonyms are used for reasons of confidentiality, according to UBC ethical review policies (see Appendix A for the ethical approval certificate), although all gave their written informed consent to participate.
Three interviews were conducted in Mandarin Chinese (and translated by me into English); the fourth interviewee, who has been in Canada for many years and is highly proficient in English and other European languages, took part in an English interview, according to his preference. The language of the original interview is indicated at the end of each excerpt.

4.2 New Arrivals of Immigrants and the Rapid Expansion of CHL in BC

For the past three decades, the economic development of the Pacific Rim, especially with the rise of the People’s Republic of China, has enhanced the status of the Chinese language considerably. As Chinese-speaking regions such as China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore have become attractive sites for economic investments, foreign trade, and cultural exchange, attitudes and behaviours towards the Chinese language in the world have become much more favourable. CHL education has therefore become a significant trend in many education systems outside of China in the Chinese Diaspora (He & Xiao, 2008). In Canada, one of the most vigorously growing areas for CHL education is British Columbia.

In the 1980s and 1990s, China’s “open door” policy, described in Chapter 3, advanced its economic goals, resulting in the growth of a relatively affluent middle class in China. The policy also allowed more freedom for Chinese people, especially professionals or students and their families, to leave the country for better academic, career and life opportunities. Canada, especially BC, became a favourite destination for Chinese immigrants. Then the Canadian government opened its immigration office in Beijing in order to directly process immigration applications from China (Guo & DeVoretz, 2006). As a result, immigration to Canada became much easier than before for Chinese people.

In 1989, the Tiananmen incident and the perceived uncertainty of Hong Kong’s hand-over to Mainland China in 1997 also pushed many Chinese scholars and families to join the
Chinese immigration flow to Canada, Australia, and other former British colonies. British Columbia, being Canada’s Pacific gateway, received considerable immigration from China during the 1990s, a trend that has only intensified since. The 1996 Canadian Census indicates that BC’s ethnic mosaic changed due to a high immigration growth rate, and Chinese became the third largest ethnic group in the province (BC Stats, 1998a). The Chinese immigrants coming in the 1990s included a large proportion of economic, entrepreneur-class and investor immigrants, with much higher educational qualifications and financial assets than those who came in the early days (Guo & DeVoretz, 2006; Wang & Lo, 2004). These new arrivals have changed the overall demographic profile of Chinese immigrants tremendously. The economic power and political representation of the Chinese Canadian population became more visible. Knowing Chinese and being able to speak it started to become an asset rather than a “shame” for many Chinese speakers.

Changes in the China’s foreign relations have always affected the Chinese Diaspora around the world. The strong economic growth and the relatively stable political situation in China during these last two decades have helped overseas Chinese immigrants to rebuild their cultural identity, pride, and confidence. And the vast career opportunities related to China have resulted in great efforts being expended to support CHL education for the next generation. As a result, Chinese schools in British Columbia have grown into well-organized language and cultural institutions, and many newly funded Chinese schools have also emerged in the community.

The traditional Chinese schools near Chinatown, such as Victoria Public Chinese School, Mon Keang School, and Vancouver Public Chinese School, have also survived, and even flourished. After operating for several decades, Vancouver Public Chinese School’s old-church-
turned school building was dilapidated. People started to fundraise for a new school building since 1980. The school administrator, Guo (a pseudonym), mentioned during the interview that with sufficient financial support from the Chinese community and Taiwan government, the new school was reconstructed and completed in 1983.

In 1981 the Chinese Cultural Centre Chinese School was officially established to foster Chinese culture and language education (Yu, 2000). In 1996, the school had two learning centers and 50 instructors offering 100 classes to over 1,500 students in Vancouver. In 2000, the school expanded to 9 learning centers across the Lower Mainland in BC and hired 105 instructors teaching 230 classes ranging from pre-school to pre-university to over 3,500 students. By then, it had become the largest Chinese school in Canada (Hsiung, 2000).

At the same time, Vancouver Chinese School of Taiwan Universities Alumni Association of Western Canada (台湾大专加西校友会中文学校) was also expanding. According to the school’s second principal, Qian (1995), its student numbers increased from 300 in 1981 to over 1,000 in 1988. In 1999, the school celebrated its 20th anniversary, and by then, it had had 5 campuses across the Lower Mainland in British Columbia, offering classes to over 1,500 students (http://blog.huayuworld.org/school17/11812).

In 1996, a group of teachers from Mainland China founded the Vancouver Beijing Chinese School. During the interview with one of the current administrators, Ming, I was informed that the school was the first registered Chinese school that focused on teaching Mandarin and simplified Chinese in British Columbia. Ming also mentioned that today the number of CHL students’ is increasing, but the students are mainly concentrated in those big well-operated Chinese schools. As a result, the total number of CHL schools has been decreasing in the Lower Mainland in BC.
In addition to appearing in the main cities in BC, such as Vancouver and Victoria, some well-operated Chinese schools also started to appear in other cities in BC, such as Richmond and Burnaby. For example, Zhenguang Chinese School (真光中文学校, Truelight Chinese School) was established in 1979 in Richmond. It originated from a Hong Kong Christian school and was funded by a former Hong Kong principal. The school uses textbooks from Hong Kong and teaches Cantonese, but because of the increasing importance and popularity of Mandarin, they now have added to each class a 30 minute Mandarin section, teaching students pinyin, the Mandarin phonetic system (http://www.singtao.ca/van/school/index.php).

In 1989, passionate parents initiated the establishment of Kiu Do (侨道) Chinese school in Burnaby, with support from the Burnaby School Board and BC Heritage Language Association. Initially, the parents only hoped that the children would learn to speak Cantonese and thus would be able to communicate with their family members. But over the years, the outcome turned out to be much more positive than they had expected. In 1999, on its 10th anniversary, Kiu Do (侨道) Chinese School in Burnaby had over 1,200 students. In both 2003 and 2004, the school won the award for being the school that had the biggest number of winners at the Chinese Composition Contest hosted by the Vancouver Chinese Library (http://www.kiudo.net).

By the end of the 20th century, there were over 200 Chinese schools, 500 teachers and over 20,000 students attending Chinese schools in British Columbia (Kan, 2000). Today, it is well accepted that CHL education is thriving in BC. However, no official detailed data exist about the number of CHL programs, students and teachers in the province.
4.3 Professional Organizations of CHL in BC

As the number of Chinese schools began to grow rapidly, non-profit social/professional organizations supporting CHL education also appeared in BC during the 1980s and 1990s to strengthen the cooperation among Chinese schools. Today the largest organizations for CHL education in BC include: Chinese Language Association of BC (卑诗省中文协会, established in 1981), Western Canada Chinese Schools Association (加西中文侨校联合会, established in 2000), and BC Chinese School Association (卑诗中文学校联合会, established in 1997).

These associations are run by volunteers who devote their time and efforts to promote Chinese language and culture education in Canada. With greater collective power, they also played an important role in the 1995 Petition to demand that the BC government include Chinese as one of the Provincial Examination subjects. The Chinese Language Association, together with other stakeholders and experts, helped the BC Ministry of Education write the “Integrated Resource Package” for Chinese courses in public schools, and the BC Chinese School Association completed a three-volume “Suggested Curriculum Guide for Chinese Language” in 2001 for community Chinese schools in BC. These materials have had a great impact, providing professional guidance for both public and community/private schools with regard to issues of curriculum design, teaching methodology and assessment standards in Chinese language teaching. Besides the routine work of coordinating and supporting Chinese school operations, they have conducted many cultural and educational projects such as teacher training workshops, annual conferences, speech contests and cultural festival celebrations.

For example, the Chinese Language Association of BC (卑诗省中文协会) has member schools enrolling immigrant students from different Chinese speaking regions such as Mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Macao and Singapore. The association holds meetings annually
discussing major issues in CHL education with their teachers. It also collaborated with a local Chinese newspaper and established a student column called “Chinese Corner” to publish youths’ essays in Chinese. To improve teaching quality, the association organized study tours for teachers and principals in BC’s Chinese schools to attend Chinese language teaching workshops in China and Taiwan. Since 2000, it has been working closely with the Chinese government and organizing “Root Seeking” Summer Camps for Chinese Canadian youth in order for them to have a better understanding of Chinese language and culture and their own heritage identity. Over the years, its membership increased from dozens initially to over 300, and it has become an active force in CHL education in British Columbia.

4.4 The Validation of CHL in the BC Public Education System

In recent years, faced with the pressures and promises of globalization and global citizenship, educational communities and society at large in BC have become more aware of, and responsive to, the diverse linguistic backgrounds, needs, and aspirations of their student population. This is a gradual process, however, and much more needs to be done to promote multilingualism in Canadian society in Indigenous, heritage and (other) international languages.

With an increasing number of Chinese descendents attending public schools, since 1986 the BC Ministry of Education officially added Mandarin to the province’s second language programs and developed a curriculum for it and several other international languages from Grade 5-12 (http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/irp/manchi512/chitoc.htm) as well as a written standardized Grade 12 examination. Officially, these documents and programs were not created for the heritage populations however but, rather, were intended for English-speaking “second language” learners.
X. Wang (1996) observed that Chinese language programs in the US public school system at that time were largely taken by heritage students with Chinese family backgrounds, and many of them had attended community language schools. Although in BC the Mandarin curriculum was developed specifically for non-heritage students, a similar situation was observed by Peng, a BC certified high school Mandarin teacher I interviewed. She mentioned that her students were mainly Chinese descendents and some of her students had previously attended weekend or afterschool Chinese classes. In this respect, the Mandarin programs in BC’s public school system provide some support for CHL education, even if they were not designed for that purpose or population.

Canadian official-language bilingualism (English-French), as an extension of the federal multiculturalism policy, recognizes the value of immigrants’ heritage languages, although it privileges English and French, the two founding colonial languages of Confederation. However, education in Canada, including language education, is determined and governed by each province’s local priorities, policies and population. For the past 15 years approximately, the policy has been that students in BC must take a second language course from Grades 5 to 8, either French or another approved international language, such as Japanese, Mandarin, Punjabi, German or Spanish, but specific language programs are only offered when there is an adequate number of interested students, parents, and qualified teachers (Cumming, 2000; Reeder, Hasebe-Ludt & Thomas, 1997). Another Mandarin language expert I interviewed, Lin, a certified former public school teacher and current language program administrator at a university in British Columbia, witnessed the implementation of the policy to include Mandarin in the BC public school system. He described it as follows:

When I came to Canada in 1987, Chinese was not even taught at public schools. Of course, there were some heritage language schools. Right at that time, around
late 1980s and the early ‘90s, there was a sort of fad in BC about the Asia-Pacific. We were considering ourselves a gateway to Asia. I have to say China at that time was not very noticeable on the political map because China had barely opened its door and few people knew about this country. There was lots of talk about it, but China was not what it is today, but Japan was very, very strong. Thanks to a group of advocating parents and also to the people who believed in the future of our province lying in Asia-Pacific, they pushed really hard to get Chinese and Japanese languages into the public school system. Politically you have to have the will to start something. I always talk about Chinese and Japanese together because we were on the same page in terms of their inception into BC’s public school system. Mandarin Chinese and Japanese went hand in hand. [It] started with the political motivation and parent involvement, and gradually, we made it through. (English in original).

As I mentioned before, with the Chinese community’s strong appeals, beginning in 1994, the BC government started to incorporate Chinese language into the BC Provincial Examinations. After that, Chinese language education (for both heritage and non-heritage students) became even more popular in BC’s public education system. The number of students taking Mandarin classes between 1990 and 1996 increased from 1,077 to 4,425; that is an increase of over 300% (Ministry of Education, Skills and Training Standard Report 1574F, cited in Krieger & McMurphy, 1998). Ming, one of the leaders in the Chinese Language Association of BC, described her experience with the Mandarin provincial exam in her interview, explaining that it also provided the impetus for more heritage and non-heritage students to study Mandarin:

In 1998, especially in 2000, the Chinese language education reached its peak. There were several types of evidence. One was the number of students taking Chinese Provincial Exam. French, as one of the official languages, was also considered a second language, but the number of students taking French Exam was less than the number of students taking Chinese Exam. There were 2,000 to 3,000 students taking Chinese Exam annually. (Chinese in original; translated by author).

In 1998, as noted earlier, the British Columbia Ministry of Education published a complete curriculum Mandarin Chinese 5 to 12 Integrated Resource Package. It was a revision based on several previous curricula introduced in the 1980s (BC Ministry of Education, Skills
and Training, 1998): a Mandarin Chinese curriculum for Grades 9 to 12 (1986-87), and the
Intermediate Mandarin Chinese Curriculum Guide (Grades 4 to 7), which was published in 1989

Another important guide for Chinese language education was Suggested Curriculum
Guide for Chinese Language published by BC Chinese Schools Association (卑诗省中文学校联
会) in 1999. These two handbooks formulated foundation for Chinese language education in
public schools serving heritage language students—even if they were not developed with the
needs and interests of that population. These resources also provided direction for curriculum,
pedagogy and assessment for the Chinese schools in the community. Under current pressure
from parents to establish “early-start” Mandarin programs from kindergarten for public-school
children, further age-appropriate Canadian curriculum and materials development for young
learners of Chinese (both heritage and non-heritage) are also urgently needed in several
Vancouver-area schools.

4.5 The Needs and Challenges of Current CHL Education in BC

4.5.1 The Need for Pedagogical Reform

Entering the public school system was a big step in the history of BC’s Chinese language
education. However, this recent development has also brought about new issues regarding how
to articulate the heritage (informal community programs) and formal education sectors, how to
teach and place heritage speakers in institutional public Chinese programs and how to capitalize
on the wealth of Chinese schools but at the same time help them improve/reform as professional
partners to regular school programs (Li & Duff, 2008; Duff, 2008).

As the two sectors interact more closely and frequently, the traditional teaching methods
used in old CHL schools has become more and more challenged by Western (mainstream)
pedagogical ideas. Typically, since heritage language learners already possess certain cultural
to knowledge and oral communicative competence but lack of reading and writing skills, CHL
teaching has put great emphasis on literacy development mainly by repetitive practice and rote
memorization. Many Chinese teachers believe that learning the logographic system of the
Chinese written form requires rigorous instruction and repeated practice. As Guo, the
administrator of Vancouver Public Chinese School, mentioned during our interview:

> Chinese language itself is completely different from the Western languages. It is a
general perspective that Chinese is difficult to learn. Because English is an
alphabetic language, as long as they know the way of spelling, they are able to
write it if they can speak it. They might think memorizing words is fairly simple.
But Chinese characters are all about putting the strokes in special shapes…The
beginners don’t know that the structure of the characters is helpful in terms of
learning Chinese. At the beginning, it is impossible to teach them the six
categories of Chinese characters. So they find it very difficult to write Chinese
characters.

> The teachers usually ask the junior students in kindergarten, grade one and two to
write each word for a whole line, so they feel “oh, there’s so much homework”. For
the senior students, we also ask them to write each phase for one or two lines. So
comparatively speaking, it seems that their English schools don’t have much
homework, and it’s more relaxing… (Chinese in original; translated by author).

> Reciting texts is another essential part of Chinese language learning tradition, since
quoting famous phrases in classical literature is considered as being well educated. This is why
“Copying Essays” and “Writing Essays from Memory” were two single separate subjects in
Vancouver Public Chinese School’s curriculum for many decades. (See the timetable shown in
Figure 4.1; these courses are indicated with the arrows at the bottom centre of the document.)
Another pedagogical issue is the different beliefs in teaching methodology. Generally speaking, most teachers in Chinese schools were educated and trained in Mainland China, Hong Kong or Taiwan. As mentioned in Chapter 1, their way of teaching was heavily influenced by Confucian philosophy which emphasizes filial piety and believes that teachers are authority figures who transmit wisdom and should be respected as one’s parents. Therefore, the sorts of exciting activities commonly seen in Western classrooms do not fit in with the serious atmosphere created in the long established traditional Chinese teaching. Consequently, CHL teaching in some Chinese schools is usually teacher-centered and focuses mainly on vocabulary and grammar instruction, representing a structure-oriented approach to language teaching (Loke, 2002). However, this culturally-rooted and seemingly rigid teaching style differs greatly from the teaching in students’ regular, mainstream schools which advocates an interactive learner-
centered teaching style. As a result of the discrepancy between these two types of teaching styles, CHL students often feel “caught” between educational cultures. According to Guo, an Cantonese school principal,

Cultural background differences also result in the differences in teaching styles. The students feel that in English schools, the classes are more relaxed and there are more activities. But in Chinese schools, since our teachers are all from Hong Kong and China, they all teach in a traditional way. For example, the classes have to maintain a very good order, you can’t talk and walk around whenever you like. The teaching style is more teacher centered lecturing style. So the students feel a little bored. Because our class time is after their English classes, they may also feel tired. Therefore the older students sometimes will be a little resistant. Sometimes, the teachers had a hard time to manage them. (Chinese in original; translated by author).

Peng, the High school Mandarin teacher, also observed the differences and made the following comments during the interview:

You have to do more activities in public school classes. In China, there are no activities like projects and presentations. The teacher lectures to the whole class and then the students take a big pile of homework back home. But here, you have to give them different tasks and get them involved. For example, during our school’s Multicultural event, you have to do presentations to show other people various aspects of our culture.

Over 90% of the students are forced to do something, they always feel resistant. And I also feel that they (i.e., the community school teachers) teach in a very traditional way, because I know some people teaching there…they didn’t have any training here, so their teaching style is naturally imported from China. They were brought up that way, so they train their students in the same way. (Chinese in original; translated by author).

However, Ming, a BC Chinese Language Association leader as well as an administrator of a well-known Chinese school, expressed a different opinion:

Our school teachers are better, because they have two training sections annually. Some of our teachers were educated in China but have gone through Canadian education here. The others were completely [educated in China], many of them are excellent teachers; some are even Super Level ¹ teachers. The teachers

¹特级教师(Super Level Teacher) is a title granted by provincial government to teachers in primary and secondary schools (including secondary normal schools), who are excellent in many respects such as teachers' ethics, educating students, teaching, etc.
coming from China, I am telling you, are excellent. The teaching activities are much better than the ones in North America.

I don’t consider the North America teaching style my standard. I think it’s about selecting excellence from both sides. You know, knowledge is accumulated over time. It requires repetitive accumulation… Like Montessori, now people have many questions [about this teaching approach]. They say “let them teach while letting the students have fun… let them learn while having fun.” But knowledge learning is extremely serious. If you want to let them play, then just let them play… We did some research at the University of Victoria, a survey among 8-12 year olds about children’s achievement in Western culture traditions and Eastern culture: North American education is not the best. (Chinese in original; translated by author).

It is clear that within the field of CHL education, there are educators embracing different or sometimes conflicting pedagogical philosophies. Usually, the teachers coming from the Western education system emphasize interactive teaching/learning activities and a student-oriented teaching style, while most teachers from the more traditional Chinese education system prefer the teacher-centered lecturing style. The mismatch between the traditional CHL teaching style and the students’ mainstream school experience is obvious. Similar issues are often encountered in heritage classes for other languages as well. For example, while Shin (2005) calls for replacing the tedious and unproductive teaching style with a more active and creative one in Korean community schools, Douglas (2005) advocates a more appropriate theoretical framework for the Japanese heritage language schools.

Therefore, with a history of over a century’s presence in BC, CHL education will definitely need some significant pedagogical reform to be able to continue its mission in this modern multilingual society and to respond to the interests of young Canadian learners.
4.5.2 The Challenge of Diverse Origins and Needs in CHL Education

New challenges have also emerged with the new waves of Chinese immigration from highly diverse origins. From the previous description of the historical development of Chinese communities in BC, we can see that Chinese immigrants are not a monolithic group, as is generally perceived in mainstream society. They are tremendously different based on geographic, linguistic and cultural origin, socioeconomic class, social and political affiliation, as well as levels of educational and professional attainment. The incessant influx of Chinese newcomers only further increases the social complexity of Chinese communities. As a result, the types of Chinese schools that each Chinese community establishes and operates vary in many ways.

Parallel to the immigration patterns of the Chinese, there are three major types of Chinese schools in BC: the traditional Chinese schools in and around Chinatowns which mainly teach Cantonese and traditional characters; the Chinese schools established by immigrants from Taiwan which teach Mandarin and traditional characters; and the Chinese schools established by recent immigrants from Mainland China which teach Mandarin and simplified characters. Although the latter two types both teach Mandarin pronunciation, they use different phonetic systems: Pinyin, a Romanization system used in Mainland China and Zhuyin, a system of phonetic (but not Roman/alphabetic) symbols used in Taiwan. These three types of CHL schools used to be independent of one another and usually did not interact. Furthermore, the two major CHL organizations in BC are sponsored by Taiwan and Mainland governments respectively. Sometimes it can become quite confusing or complicated for parents to choose the “right” school for their children, or it can even be controversial for administrators and teachers to choose the “right” variety of spoken or written Chinese to teach in their schools.
Recently, there is a growing trend for these different schools to modify their curriculum, trying to accommodate the new demographic change in the local community and to meet the students’ needs. For example, Vancouver Chinese School of Taiwan Universities Alumni Association of Western Canada (台灣大专加西校友会中文学校) originally used textbooks from Taiwan, teaching Zhuyin fuhao (注音符号, the Taiwanese phonetic system for Mandarin pronunciation) and traditional characters. Since 1999, however, because of the strong economic boom in China, it started to teach pinyin, the commonly used Mandarin phonetic system in Mainland China (http://blog.huayuworld.org/school17/11812).

Another example is the True Light Chinese School which previously used textbooks from Hong Kong and taught only Cantonese. However, due to the increasing popularity of Mandarin, the school added a 30-minute Mandarin section to each class, teaching students pinyin, the Mandarin phonetic system (http://www.singtao.ca/van/school/index.php).

Likewise, Kiu Do (侨道) Chinese school in Burnaby, which used to teach only Cantonese and Mandarin Zhuyin fuhao (the phonetic system used in Taiwan), also started to teach pinyin to meet the growing public demand for it.

During my interview with Guo, the current administrator of Vancouver Public Chinese School, he told me that his school had 300 students, mainly from Cantonese-speaking families. Guo also mentioned that the school had kept a strong connection with [Taiwan] Overseas Compatriot Affairs Commission which had been supplying textbooks for them since the very beginning of the school. Cantonese remains the main instruction language but Mandarin is now also taught in the same class. Guo reported:

Our teachers are mainly from Hong Kong, because the students’ mother tongue is Cantonese… Of course, now Mandarin is getting more important, so when hiring the teachers, we first consider those who came from Guangzhou or Hong Kong. If they came from Guangzhou, they have good Cantonese and Mandarin. Those who
We don’t have [separate] Cantonese classes and Mandarin classes, but we require the teachers to teach both. That is, when they read the text, they read in Cantonese and Mandarin, but the explanation is mainly in Cantonese, especially for the junior grades. Starting in grade four and five, we gradually add the Mandarin portion, and will talk in Mandarin…

We will continue to teach Cantonese…I think it will be the same in the future. There will not be a big change in this principle, because we are a traditional overseas Chinese school. In parents’ view, traditional overseas Chinese schools should keep Cantonese, because most of our students’ families are of Guangdong origin, including early immigrants and new immigrants. So pedagogically, we will increase Mandarin but we will keep Cantonese. (Chinese in original; translated by author).

From the above excerpt, we can see that this school’s choice of language variety for teaching has been deeply rooted in the history of early Chinese immigration in BC. Cantonese is the language that the school has been teaching since the very beginning. It was considered the standard “Chinese” in the early overseas Chinese community because the majority of the early immigrants came from Guangdong province, where Cantonese was the “official” language. However, the school has been accommodating the fast changes in the modern, diversified society, while at the same time, making a great effort to keep its own tradition of being a Cantonese school.

4.5.3 Challenges Related to Insufficient Government Support

Successful heritage language education is closely related to governmental policies. Different language ideologies, such as language-as-problem, language-as-right, or language-as-resource, are closely associated with different language policies (Ruiz, 1984). Interestingly, whereas the Canadian government used to provide considerable support for community HL programs, believing that they contributed to Canadian society and to the life of diverse immigrant groups, HL program funding has been greatly reduced in recent years. In contrast, in
the US, funding for HL programs in both private and public education sectors has increased dramatically recently. Such decisions are related to language ideologies and politics. For example, not very long ago (and even now in some contexts), some people viewed heritage language maintenance as an obstacle (“language-as-problem”) to socio-educational success and social cohesion. Speaking one’s heritage language was even perceived as a deficiency associated with poverty and underachievement. This negative view reinforced English-only policies in public schools and in some states forced the closure of bilingual programs for minority students (Spanish students wishing to learn both Spanish and English) but not immersion or two-way bilingual programs for majority students (e.g., English speakers wishing to learn Spanish). Other people, coming from a completely opposite ideological position (many of whom were applied linguists), were concerned about the heritage language learners’ rights to equal education during the civil rights movement (“language-as-right” advocates). But recently, attitude towards languages in the US have slowly begun to incorporate a third orientation, known as “language-as-resource,” which basically refers to the advantageous role of language other than English in the United States (Thompson 1973, p. 227; Ruiz 1988, pp. 14-18) and of highly trained speakers of those languages, especially for purposes of national defense. As a result, Federal funding to support the teaching of Mandarin has increased under the National Security Language Initiative since its establishment in 2006. Budgets of $65.5 million in 2007 and $85.9 million in 2008 were appropriated for “critical language” programs across the Departments of Education, Defense, State and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, with Chinese (Mandarin) as one of the targeted languages (U.S. Department of Education, 2007, p. 26).

In Canada, even though the nation’s multiculturalism policy encourages people to value Canadians’ heritage languages, according to Cumming (2000), the funding associated with
second language education (apart from Official Languages) is limited and rarely connected directly to school language programs. Currently other funding issues are connected with whether Canadian Chinese language education (heritage and non-heritage) should receive financial, curricular and textbook support from the Chinese government—even as the local BC government cutbacks are such that they cannot launch the new Mandarin immersion or bilingual programs that parents have enthusiastically called for. The financial support for Chinese language education is simply insufficient in British Columbia. Whereas the provincial government used to do a good job of supporting heritage language education, the financial assistance has been declining over the years, as Guo mentioned in the following interview excerpt:

When I first came to this school, at the end of the 1980s…, BC government provided financial assistance to our school every year. I checked our old record, around $3,000 per year. It was pretty good at that time…It might have been that there was financial assistance to all heritage language schools, and it came from the BC’s Multicultural Department…This financial support decreased from the original $3,000, to $2,000, to $1,000, and is getting less and less…I checked our documents; 2003 was the last year of the assistance. There has been none since 2004. (Chinese in original; translated by author).

At present, most Chinese schools are registered as non-profit schools and run on a charity-basis by the Chinese community, organizations or passionate parents. During an interview, Ming mentioned that the tuition at her Chinese School for one term is $170 per student. That amounts to about $3-5 per hour, which is affordable for the students’ families, but makes it difficult for the school to sustain its programs, cover its overhead, and pay its teachers. More financial support from the government would not only give students more books, more field trips, and more classroom activities, but also would signify the value placed by the government on CHL, which in turn would enhance the status of the language, build up school administrators’ confidence and students’ and teachers’ motivation, and improve the quality of teaching. Nevertheless, currently, with a wide range of budget cut in education, BC’s Chinese
schools will most likely have to depend entirely on the goodwill of local Chinese communities in the province for their funding.

4.5.3.1 Support for Teacher Education

First of all, as discussed in the previous section, CHL students represent a large proportion of students in public school Chinese language programs (even though the programs were designed for non-Chinese learners). The rapid increase of Chinese immigrant students and a corresponding desire among non-Chinese Canadians to learn “Chinese as a Global/International Language” has given rise to growing demand for certified Chinese language teachers in British Columbia. However, the supply is very limited. This has become a major problem not only for BC educators but for North America as a whole. For example, in the US, the Asia Society and the College Board (2008) reported that, “anyone in the field of Chinese education readily recognizes the shortage of teachers,” yet the “quantity and quality of Chinese language teachers remains the key bottleneck in building capacity” (p. 4). The dire shortage of qualified---and certified---Chinese language teachers has been an issue since Chinese language entered public school system in BC (and persists in many community language contexts as well). Lin, the director of a university language program in BC, recalled during his interview the situation in the 1990s:

The real challenge at that time, in the early 90s, was the shortage of teachers, qualified teachers, or licensed teachers. I think I should make the distinction between qualified vs. licensed. We were short of licensed teachers teaching Chinese and Japanese which were the first second languages introduced into the BC public school system. You have some [licensed] teachers who are probably passionate about teaching Chinese or Japanese, but linguistically they were not capable. They are not 100% qualified. What we did at that time was that the Ministry of Education of BC actually set up separate funding and put the native speakers into a special teacher education program, because those native speakers might be very experienced teachers teaching Chinese back home in China, but their credentials were not recognized here. (English in original)
Unfortunately, extensive teacher education for prospective Chinese teachers specifically doesn’t exist in British Columbia anymore. (Teacher education courses tend to either focus on French as a second language, separately, or a combination of other modern languages, dealt with together.) Anyone who wants to become a certified Chinese language teacher has to go through a post-secondary teacher education program which usually requires a four-year Bachelor’s degree from an English-speaking university followed by a one-year or two-year education program in BC. This prerequisite prevents many Chinese language teachers from entering the program because their post-secondary education was most likely obtained outside of Canada. Therefore, on the one hand, there is a great demand for qualified and certified Chinese language teachers, but on the other hand, a good number of experienced and proficient Chinese language teachers exist but cannot obtain credentials to teach or admission to teacher-education programs. (In the past, furthermore, teachers of these minority languages also required another concentration, such as mathematics, but often language majors lack sufficient credits in another widely taught school subject such as mathematics and must redo their coursework. And not all teachers trained overseas are able to communicate sufficiently well in English, their second language, either.)

During the interviews, both Lin and Peng agreed that English language proficiency and additional training in a Canadian education program are extremely important. Therefore, designing a program that is most suitable for non-Canadian educated second language teachers should be a priority for the BC Ministry of Education and local schools and teacher education programs. Such a program would not only help train more qualified teachers for the public schools but also for traditional CHL schools.
4.5.3.2 Support from the Chinese Government

Following a long tradition in the BC overseas-Chinese community, CHL education is also linked closely with the Diaspora’s cultural identity and heritage pride. Therefore, in addition to needing support from the Canadian government, it also needs more support from the Chinese government. According to the high school Mandarin teacher, Peng, the Chinese government needs to take a more active initiative in supporting CHL education in public schools, in addition to their traditionally affiliated community schools (although this point is rather controversial in BC). She made the following comments:

I feel that the support from Consulate of China, the Chinese government, to us is not as much as to the community schools. Of course, there are many reasons. For example, the community school administrators have close relations with the Chinese government officials. They know the protocols…For a community school administrator, his/her main duty is, except for managing the employees, to deal with the upper level officials from the Chinese government. But for us, if I want to be a representative, I have to use my own time besides my full time job, but every teacher has a very heavy workload…

I will give you a very simple example. I wanted to go to the Chinese government sponsored Textbook Resource Centre located on Granville Street. We asked many times, if they could please open during the weekend. “No”. They are only open from Monday to Friday. We said we were teaching classes from Monday to Friday. Could you open just one morning or one afternoon on Saturdays? But “No”! Why “No”?! Couldn’t you close on Mondays and open on Saturdays?! You will still be open five days a week. It is impossible for us to go on Mondays, but we can go on Saturdays. It’s very unlikely for me to take one day off to go to the bookstore, and the only time we can go is when we have ProD (Professional Development Day), but we have other activities on ProD, and when we got there, they were about to close. This is just a very simple example. I feel they lack initiatives. (Chinese in original; translated by author).

It is undeniable that the Chinese government has made a great effort in promoting overseas Chinese language education in recent decades. It established the Hanban/Confucius Institute Headquarters, which is affiliated with the Chinese Ministry of Education and aims at promoting overseas Chinese language and cultural education. In June
2010, the Chinese government donated Chinese books, DVDs and dictionaries---worth one million Chinese yuan, through Hanban to local high schools and libraries in the city of Coquitlam, BC. This funding reflects a high-level official relationship between the governments; however, the situation Peng described indicates that more support is needed at a lower but more practical level—the level at which teachers work.

4.6 Summary

Since the 1980s, with the strong economic growth in China and the implementation of the multiculturalism policy in Canada, CHL education in British Columbia entered its current stage of rapid expansion. During these several decades, many Chinese schools, including those newly established and traditional ones like Vancouver Public Chinese School, expanded considerably and numbers of students increased dramatically. New challenges arose in the form of new waves of Chinese immigration from highly diversified origins, which forced Chinese-language schools to modify their operating philosophies and curriculum and even incorporate different phonetic systems, different language varieties (Cantonese or Mandarin), and different orthographic systems (traditional or simplified characters). Different teaching methodologies also were adopted in some schools under pressure from learners.

Professional associations such as BC Chinese Language Association (卑诗省中文协会) and BC Chinese Schools Association (卑诗省中文学校联会) also were established and have played an important role in supporting CHL education. The enhanced status of the Chinese language and the increased number of Chinese immigrants occurred in parallel with the BC government’s implementation of a language policy incorporating Mandarin into the province’s public school curriculum and the BC Provincial Examinations.
Being a new subject in the public school system, Chinese education was caught between traditional Chinese teaching styles and the more active Western styles. Therefore, it unavoidably became a pedagogical topic among educators. Moreover, CHL education links both sides of the Pacific Ocean, and therefore needs governmental support from both the Canadian government and the Chinese governments. In British Columbia, a lack of licensed Chinese language teachers in public schools is one of the major problems that needs to be addressed. In addition, insufficient financial support also holds back CHL education in the province. On the other hand, there is also the possibility (and related controversy) that the Chinese government might also need to take more initiative to support Chinese education in public schools.

As Hornberger (1998) points out, the gap between policy making and policy implementation is largely evident in the field of language education. Therefore, it is essential for both Canadian and BC governments to not only make comprehensive and practical policies for language education that will foster greater societal multilingualism, but also implement them in the real life of the students, teachers, and their families. Assistance from the Chinese government would also be instrumental in supporting CHL education—although historically Hanban has been more interested in supporting the acquisition of Chinese by non-heritage populations around the world.
Chapter 5

Contemporary Theoretical and Practical Issues in Chinese as a Heritage Language and Academic Achievement

5.1 Introduction

The previous three chapters have provided a historical sketch and contextualization of the changing statues, role, purposes, implementation, and policies regarding Chinese heritage education in BC from the late 1880s to present. They have also described the political context in both advances and declines in Chinese language education here. Against that backdrop, this chapter provides a broader theoretical (cognitive and linguistic) rationale and discussion of the benefits of heritage language education in general, not only for Chinese or in British Columbia specifically. It also presents some of the research conducted over the past 20 years in North America on the benefits of heritage language education.

Apart from the descriptive historical research presented in earlier chapters, relatively little applied linguistic research has been published to date on CHL in BC (see Li & Duff, 2008). However, a growing body of research exists on CHL internationally—especially now in the US, where substantial government and other resources are being devoted to CHL—and on other heritage-language programs and issues connected with them. The purpose of this chapter is to consider future directions, possibilities, and priorities for Chinese heritage language programs, pedagogy, and research in the BC context.

5.2 Heritage Language Development, Bilingualism, and Academic Success

As we have seen, Chinese HL education, HL maintenance, and HL use have been a presence in the province of British Columbia for over a century. However, since the very beginning, as is often the case with bilingual education, there have been concerns among
English-speaking parents, educators, and policy-makers about the English proficiency or the overall academic achievement of children from Chinese immigrant families. There may also have been concerns among the Chinese-speaking parents about possible negative effects of perpetuating their Chinese education in lieu of English education but that is not documented in the BC literature. Some people have regarded these children’s Chinese language maintenance as an obstacle preventing them from achieving success in the English education system---or at least delaying their development in the dominant language of society.

English proficiency is essential for one to integrate fully in society and succeed in English-speaking Canada and other English-dominant countries, but it doesn’t mean that children have to sacrifice their heritage language or that HL maintenance precludes linguistic or academic achievement in the dominant language. A considerable body of research evidence from the past several decades has shown that HL acquisition and maintenance are positively associated with various benefits for learners, including high academic achievement, a strong sense of cultural identity, and better social relations with extended families, etc. (e.g., Baker, 2001; Escamilla & Medina, 1993; Feuerverger, 1991; Fishman, 1991; Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders & Christian, 2006; Hao & Bonstead-Bruns, 1998; Hinton, 1999; Swain & Lapkin, 1991; Thomas & Collier, 2002; Tse, 2001; Tseng & Fuligni, 2000; Weger-Guntharp, 2006). Research has also paid a great deal of attention to some of the related aspects in CHL education, such as learners’ own motivation for learning their HL and family support for it as well. Some of this research is described below.
5.2.1 Benefits of CHL Education

5.2.1.1 Academic and Linguistic Benefits

As early as in 1981, Cummins proposed the linguistic interdependence theory which states that cross-lingual proficiencies lie beneath the obvious differences of each language; bilinguals develop a conceptual and metalinguistic knowledge base that is common to both and can transfer from one to the other (Cummins, 1981). Furthermore, he pointed out that bilingual education promotes not only native language proficiency but also “the deeper cognitive and academic skills that underlie the development of literacy in both the bilingual’s languages” (italics in original, p. 23, also see Cummins, 1979). It has been well documented that children from programs supporting both English and children’s HL show significant gains in both languages, and HL acquisition is positively associated with a high academic achievement in the English education systems (Escamilla & Medina, 1993; Genesee et al, 2006; Thomas & Collier, 2002). For example, Yeung, Marsh and Suliman (2000) studied different groups of HL students, including Chinese, Korean, Filipino, Spanish and Greek, from an Australian nationally representative database. They found that the students’ HL proficiency in Grade 10 was positively correlated with better performance in Grade 12 standardized tests in English, math, and history. In addition, Hao and Bonstead-Bruns (1998) used US National Education Longitudinal Survey data and analyzed eighth graders from four immigrant groups, Chinese, Filipino, Korean, and Mexican. They observed that all else being equal, for immigrant students, development and maintenance of their HLs significantly enhances their academic achievement. Specifically, proficiency in HL was associated with an increase of 2.4 points in mathematics and 0.2 point in overall GPA. Swain and Lapkin’s (1991) Canadian study also demonstrated that HL education was positively correlated with HL students’ acquisition of a third language, French, and not just
with English, their second language. Moreover, S. Lee’s (2002) study of 105 U.S.-born Chinese heritage and Korean heritage high school students also shows that, compared to less fluent bilingual or monolingual students, academic achievement is superior among bilingual heritage students who value acculturation but also preserve their own language and culture.

5.2.1.2 Ethnolinguistic Identity: Development and Consolidation

In addition, research has long shown that HL maintenance is closely tied to a strong sense of ethnolinguistic identity (e.g., Baker, 2001; Feuerverger, 1991; Fishman, 1991; Pigott & Karoche, 2005). Studies have shown that students receiving formal education in HL schools tend to hold more positive views towards their heritage (e.g., Hinton, 1999; Tse, 2001). Lu (2001) illustrates that CHL education at weekend schools raises the learners’ appreciation for Chinese culture and plays a decisive role in developing Chinese American children’s identity. The study shows that, besides language institutions, Chinese schools also function as cultural sites and community centers for many Chinese American families. By participating in culturally related events such as a Chinese New Year’s party or celebratory parades and live performances, children from Chinese schools are closely connected with Chinese culture and this greatly enhances their Chinese identity. Smolicz (1992) examined three immigrant groups, Polish, Welsh and Chinese, in Australia. Their HL was one of the core cultural values held by all groups which functioned as a hallmark of a person’s ethnic identity. Weger-Guntharp (2006) interviewed eight CHL students in an American university Chinese language program and found that identity was a main reason mentioned by all the CHL learners for why they pursued higher education in Chinese. One student said, “I wanted to learn Chinese as a reassertion of my cultural identity and so I can communicate with my Mom’s side of the family in the future” (p. 32). In addition, Shi and Lu’s (2007) study also revealed that speaking in Chinese was perceived as a
sign of voluntarily identifying oneself with Chinese culture. Through discourse analysis, Verkuyten and de Wolf (2002) studied second generation Chinese Dutch in the Netherlands and found that CHL was considered “a central marker of ethnic identity” and for some of their participants, “being raised as a Chinese means knowing the language” (p. 386). As Van Dan Berg (1988) stated, ethno-linguistic identities are formed through interactions with people from families and neighborhoods. According to this view, children’s identities are closely related to their family background and their social network, which is then closely tied to their choice of language.

### 5.2.1.3 Other Benefits

Besides better academic achievement and enhanced cultural identity, literature has further documented that HL acquisition positively associates with learners’ better cognitive abilities including reasoning, creativity and critical thinking (Cummins, 1981; Yau & Jimenez, 2003), strong family cohesion (Tseng & Fuligni, 2000; Wong Fillmore, 2000) and higher self-esteem (Portes & Hao, 2002; Stalikas & Gavaki, 1995). From in-depth interviews and questionnaires, Cho (2000) found that competence in one’s HL not only provides one with greater knowledge of cultural values and a strong connection with their ethnic group, but it also enhances their social relationships, and the personal benefits eventually contribute positively to society. On the other hand, research has also documented the potential negative costs of losing one’s HL (Cho & Krashen, 1998), from disrupted family relationships (Tseng & Fuligni, 2000) to dislocated cultural identity (Imbens-Bailey, 1996, Laroche, Chankon & Hui, 1998).

### 5.2.2 Motivation of CHL Learners to Study and Maintain Chinese

He (2006) points out that CHL development is a process situated in a three-dimensional framework of time, space, and identity. She states that CHL development is socio-historically
connected through the past, the present and the future. The degree of success depends on the learners’ desire to be rooted in Chinese culture and their ongoing negotiation between the benefits in real time and in their perceived future. Chinese language learning is reported to be hard and the classes are often perceived as boring by many young students due to the teaching style and the pictographic nature of the Chinese writing system, which makes literacy development especially challenging. As S. Wang (1996), who has long been involved in CHL education in the United States, explains:

Students have to give up Saturday mornings or Sunday afternoons to go to Chinese language school. Few children enjoy this sacrifice, especially when attending the school is synonymous with homework and many tests. Studying the Chinese language requires extensive memorization and drudgery to building literacy. Coupled with the different mentalities and approaches of the teacher and schools, the tangible rewards for learning do not always seem to justify the difficulties. Children often do not see any reward for themselves (p. 64).

However, research has shown that when children grow up, many of them value the benefits of learning Chinese, despite those early hardships and misgivings. Therefore they start to appreciate their parents’ efforts and many of them are motivated to continue their HL learning (D. Li, 2005; Kondo, 1998; Shi & Lu, 2007). Comanaru and Noels (2009) conducted a quantitative analysis of 145 CHL students’ motivation to learn Chinese at a Canadian university. They noticed that the more connected the students felt to the Chinese community the more they considered learning Chinese a meaningful goal and engaged in CHL learning. Also, the students considered CHL learning an important part of their identity and they felt obligated to learn it. In Shi and Lu’s (2007) study, half of the participants felt grateful for their parents’ support and encouragement. As 15-year-old Carol mentioned, “When I was back to China, I found it amazing that I could communicate with my grandparents. I was really thankful that my parents pushed me to go to Chinese school…I felt as if it was a gift that my parents gave to me” (p. 321). In
addition, because of the belief that China is getting stronger and becoming more influential in the world, many CHL learners perceived Chinese to be a key to future career success (Weger-Guntharp, 2006). D. Li’s (2005) survey also indicated that university Chinese HL learners are motivated to learn Chinese for both integrative and instrumental reasons, and their instrumental orientation was towards building better language skills and career opportunities. Kondo-Brown (2009) studied three groups of students, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean, at an American university. She also found that the students were motivated to read in their HL because of the language’s extrinsic value, either knowledge-based value (e.g., providing a better understanding of the lifestyle and culture) or instrumental value (e.g., improving the ability to read newspapers in their HL).

As I have shown, overseas Chinese students have been motivated to learn Chinese as their HL for different reasons and goals despite its reputation for being one of the most difficult languages in the world, especially for those CHL learners who have not developed a strong foundation in the language or in Chinese character-based literacy skills at home. As Shi and Lu (2007) state, while little children “are struggling with the multitude of uncertainties involved in establishing their identity, young adults seem to have reached a more sophisticated understanding of their cultural identity and engage in more insightful self-reflections regarding their bilingual and bicultural experiences” (p. 320).

5.2.3 The Importance of Home Support for CHL Education

A large body of research evidence has shown that parents’ positive attitudes toward the HL greatly promote their children’s HL acquisition (e.g., Hinton, 1999; Lao, 2004; Luo & Wiseman, 2000). Based on Canadian census data from 1991 to 1996, Jedwab’s (2000) study revealed that among Chinese, Greek, Italian, Polish, Portuguese and Ukrainian immigrants,
Chinese were more likely to use their HL than the other groups. As Zhou and Kim (2006) point out, China is a country where access to quality education is highly competitive and a good education is one of the most important means to attain social mobility. As a result, families invest heavily in supplementary education hoping to provide better future opportunities for their children, and it has become a cultural priority that has often not only been carried to the new world but has often been the reason for immigration in the first place. Consequently, many Chinese immigrant parents turn to Chinese language schools, hoping that the extra education will help their children get ahead in Western society. Therefore, Chinese parents are enthusiastic about their children’s CHL education and are very supportive of the Chinese schools. They not only assist with the teaching and influence the curriculum, but also contribute financially by making donations and doing fundraising in addition to paying tuition (M. Li, 2005). Zhang (2004) studied Chinese parents’ motivation for having their children study CHL and found that most of the parents made great efforts to promote HL learning. Some taught Chinese to their children through daily interactions by speaking only Chinese at home. Others brought Chinese textbooks from China, taught their children and also assigned Chinese homework to them. But most commonly, parents persisted in sending their children to Chinese schools despite the considerable cost, in terms of time, money and energy. Zhang points out that Chinese parents value Chinese and their positive attitudes towards it motivate them to provide CHL education to their children. Some parents view Chinese as an important resource which will benefit their children academically and cognitively, while others consider CHL an essential part of their children’s ethnic identity development. Concerns about fostering family cohesion also motivate some parents to encourage their children to learn Chinese. As Zhang concludes, Chinese HL greatly motivates Chinese parents---as an academic resource, a part of ethnic identity and a way
of unifying family, resulting in their great determination to provide CHL education for their children.

Research has shown that some students had a strong desire to continue to develop their HL proficiency but sometimes the learning resources and the instruction they received at their HL schools were insufficient or inappropriate (J. Lee, 2002). Therefore, exposure to HL at home greatly facilitates HL learning and gives the learners the ability to internalize and utilize the linguistic input (Xiao, 2006). As a result, the home literacy environment becomes one of the imperative factors in predicting whether a HL will be retained across generations (Fishman, 1991). Tse (2001) studied U.S.-born highly successful bi-literate (in Spanish, Cantonese and Japanese) young adults and found that they all had great access to HL print at home and this increased their interest in reading in their HL.

Moreover, cohesive family relationships and an affirming home environment also positively influence students’ HL acquisition and maintenance (e.g., Romero, Robinson, Haydel, Mendoza, & Killen, 2004). Tseng and Fuligni (2000) reported that families with adolescents communicating in their HL displayed higher levels of family cohesion and discussion (also see Fuligni, 1997). Li (2006), in her Chinese Canadian case study, also pointed out that continuing HL exposure at home was critical for HL learners to achieve balanced abilities and interests in both languages, and parents’ attitudes toward Chinese language was one of the most important factors associated with children’s biliteracy development (also see Pauwels, 2005).

5.3 Summary

Parents and children in BC’s history have long promoted and pursued Chinese HL acquisition and maintenance. In the earliest period, often CHL was a manifestation of exclusion from other educational opportunities, rejection from English-speaking society and its institutions.
It was also promoted as a way of communicating within the Chinese Diaspora, in which letter-writing skills were highly valued and indeed crucial for maintaining family communication across great distances. Chinese HL maintenance was also associated with employment possibilities in ethnic Chinese communities such as Chinatown, especially when discrimination or economic downturns reduced avenues for Chinese speakers’ employment in English-speaking companies or fields. Over time, however, Chinese has come to be associated with many more opportunities and achievements---academic, linguistic, cognitive, cultural, personal, and social.

Successive generations of parents who have lobbied for Chinese language schools and education for their children for more than 100 years have typically not had access to the research literature that exists today (with the exception perhaps of recent, educated, English-literate immigrants who can access this research). Rather, their support for HL education has been intuitive, pragmatic, and deeply personal. Unfortunately, in the mid-20th century, many families and communities lost their Chinese language and literacy skills and the option of HL maintenance, and also perhaps lost the will to persevere with Chinese in the face of the English-dominant BC culture. Enthusiasm for Chinese schooling in BC waned also because of political turmoil in China, the lingering economic effects of the wartime era, and new opportunities for assimilation in English speaking institutions. However, with the current resurgence in CHL programs for both personal and instrumental gain, and with the “rise” of China as a global economic power, there is much more widespread support and enthusiasm for CHL now and more research that provides validation for it. Yet, we also know that CHL education is often not optimal---with textbooks, pedagogy, content, activities, and scheduling that are simply boring, old-fashioned, uninspired, irrelevant or inappropriate, designed for non-CHL learners or for native speakers in Chinese regions, or at odds with the students’ hybrid identities as Canadians.
who are also Chinese (Li & Duff, 2008). Promoting CHL means also developing better instructional materials, approaches, and curricula so as to attract and retain students, and help them develop, maintain, and, in turn, pass on CHL to the next generation.

Under good instructional conditions, CHL development is positively correlated with learners’ better academic achievement, enhanced cultural identity, strong family cohesion and other social benefits. Besides education in Chinese schools, an enriched HL home environment also greatly helps heritage learners to develop and maintain their HL, but it cannot be achieved without parental support. In addition to helping their children develop a Chinese cultural identity and form strong family ties, many Chinese parents consider CHL education an important form of supplementary education which will provide their children with better opportunities in the future. However, as Hornberger (2003, 2004) points out, biliteracy is often in a state of flux (with relatively more attention paid to literacy in one language rather than the other) and the learners’ attitudes towards HL are continuously negotiated through their life experiences. Chinese HL education, being a relatively new research area, is now generating huge enthusiasm both in our multilingual and multicultural society and in the scholarly field of applied linguistics. Educators ought to see HL as a valuable resource for both individuals and society (Campbell & Peyton, 1998; Krashen, 1998, Peyton, Ranard, & McGinnis, 2001) and an important site for understanding linguistic and cultural contact, socialization, transformation, and evolution.
Chapter 6

Conclusion and Future Directions

6.1 Summary of the Thesis: Chinese as a HL in British Columbia

It has taken more than a century for Canadians from non-Chinese backgrounds to recognize the importance of Chinese for Canada and for Canadian society. Yet the early Chinese-speaking pioneers understood that and attempted to establish educational opportunities for their children to learn Chinese and retain what were seen to be the best attributes of Chinese culture, identity, and values, including language ideologies. With successive waves of immigration from Chinese-speaking regions and a very successful history of HL retention, Chinese has now become one of the most commonly spoken languages in Canada (and the second most common in BC after English), with one of the largest ethnic groups in Canada associated with it.

According to Harrison (2000), the number of people claiming Chinese as their HL increased sevenfold from 1941 to 1981 and by 1996 Chinese had become one of the top-ranked HLs in Canada, in terms of speakers and vitality. In the province of British Columbia, 40% of the province’s visible minorities are Chinese, who also represent the largest visible minority group in the province (BC Stats, 2008).

Throughout BC history, CHL education has always been seen as a way to promote communications and to preserve Chinese culture. However, it started in a rather humble situation and experienced several harsh twists and turns under the social-political influences from both Canada and China. Figure 6.1 provides a graphic summary of the vascillations in CHL (both peaks and troughs) described in Chapters 2-4 and some of the main developments are summarized in this section.
In its very early days, CHL education existed merely to enable storekeepers to teach letter writing to children from rich merchant families. It allowed BC’s overseas Chinese immigrants to send messages across the Pacific Ocean to their home-lands. In the early 20th century, more organized Chinese schools, such as Victoria Chinese Public School and Vancouver Chinese Public School were established in British Columbia. Later, when Chinese students were segregated from BC public schools, CHL education served as an alternative form of education for many Chinese children who otherwise would have been deprived of any formal education.

Figure 6.1 Overall Trend of the development of BC’s CHL education between 1880s and 2010s.

Throughout the last century, CHL education was greatly influenced by social and political changes and upheavals in both Canada and China. It was a means to signal a collective identity as “Chinese” and to unify the members in Chinese communities to challenge the discrimination. It also provided a much-needed skill for employment purposes for the new generation under the effect of 1923 Chinese Exclusion Act. It witnessed and survived the hardships of WWII. Yet its great instrumental and symbolic significance ensured that it retained an important status in the Chinese Canadian community in the first half of the 20th century.

During the 1950s and 1960s, the newly established but seemingly remote Communist-led Chinese government along with its decade-long Cultural Revolution greatly decreased the perceived value of CHL for Chinese immigrants. As a result, CHL education reached the lowest
point in its history. It was not until the 1970s when China became more actively engaged with other parts of the world, and especially the West, and when Canada implemented Multiculturalism as a national policy that CHL education was re-valued, and thus revived and revitalized in the province of British Columbia.

Chinese immigrants in the past two decades have mostly been highly educated professionals committed to helping their children preserve their heritage and embrace their Chinese identity. The fact that Chinese language became a subject in BC’s public education and examination system in the 1980s and 1990s further promoted CHL education in BC. Finally, the enormous economic growth in China over the past two decades and increasing career opportunities have both largely contributed to the continued flourishing of CHL education in the 21st century. As a result, CHL education entered a soaring resurgence stage and has become “tomorrow’s language” (Chmelynski, 2006, p. 59)—not just a heritage language but a powerful language of globalization.

As we can see, along historical lines, CHL education has been under the social-political influences from both sides of the Pacific Ocean and the ethnolinguistic vitality of Chinese lies in the well perceived value of this language, which has inspired many teachers and learners. However, as Ashworth (1998) states, HL education is “both a political and an education issue” (p. 200). Therefore, its success greatly depends on the collaborative work of educators, policy makers and people across the communities (Cummins, 2005; Peyton, Ranard, & McGinnis, 2001).

### 6.2 Countering Chinese-English Language Shift

Recently, more applied linguists have added their voices to those of many generations of well meaning immigrant parents and have documented the ways in which HLs are a valuable
resource for both individuals and for society as a whole (Brecht & Ingold, 2002; Ruiz, 1984; Wang & Green, 2001). However, first language loss, that is, a language shift from a variety of Chinese to societally-dominant English, has always been an issue. Between 1981 and 1991, for example, 36% of people of Chinese origin in Canada experienced the loss of their HL (Li, 1998). According to the 1996 Canadian Census, moreover, 45,000 BC residents reported that Chinese was their first language but that they no longer even spoke it at home (BC Stats, 1998b). The number increased to 81,900 in 2001, when 872,000 Canadians reported Chinese as their mother tongue but only 790,500 spoke it on a regular basis (Chui, Tran & Flanders, 2005).

6.3 Directions for Future Research and Advocacy in CHL in British Columbia

As one of North America’s largest and most developed Chinese communities, it would be interesting to investigate the causes of first language loss on such a large scale in BC’s Chinese community, and the consequences or effects of that language loss for cultural identity formation of Chinese Canadian youth and for intergenerational relationships and cohesion.

Additionally, although CHL education is currently thriving in BC, no official detailed data exist about the number of CHL programs, students and teachers in BC. Thus, a detailed wide-scale survey is urgently needed in order to provide accurate baseline data regarding CHL education for governmental agencies, educators and researchers.

Furthermore, CHL education has benefited from BC’s official second language public education policy and programming for over a decade (although “international languages” education was not in fact designed for heritage language learners). However, little attention has been paid to CHL learners, their needs, interests, abilities, or profiles, in teacher education program (Li & Duff, 2008) or in teaching materials whatever the age, stage, or level of proficiency. Only in recent years, for example, have university Chinese language courses
provided a separate track for CHL (which still represents the largest segment of Chinese language learners in Vancouver-area universities) and developed textbooks addressing the needs and interests of CHL learners specifically.

In the field of CHL education, moreover, teachers in public schools are mostly trained according to British Columbia (Western) teaching ideologies, while teachers in private Chinese schools, if they have had training at all, received it typically in Hong Kong, Taiwan and Mainland China. The different cultural teaching styles, coupled with the complicated characteristics of the Chinese language itself (e.g. simplified vs. traditional, Mandarin vs. Cantonese, and various other orthographic and dialectal differences), have made CHL education a widely debated and contested topic. Research is therefore needed on differences in curriculum, pedagogy, and students’ achievement and levels of satisfaction with their CHL learning between public schools and private schools. Overall, we only have a vague understanding of actual pedagogical classroom practices connected with CHL education in BC at present, and with the available advanced technology, a CHL picture in “high definition” is necessary.

Finally, with the current surge in funding and interest in Chinese as an international language (not only for CHL learners) in Canada and around the world, it remains to be seen how that will affect program development, implementation, and outcomes for CHL learners as well as for their non-CHL counterparts, whether they begin learning Mandarin at a very young age or much later in life. As the political, economic, and social context and conditions in Canada continue to evolve, and with inevitable ongoing changes in China and other Chinese-speaking regions, immigration, education patterns, priorities and opportunities are also bound to change as well. Some of those changes will certainly involve Chinese language education and use in BC
and the rest of Canada, and that may usher in a new era---possibly even the “golden age” for CHL in BC as well, fuelling more opportunities for applied linguistics research.
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Appendix A: Certificate of Approval

The University of British Columbia  
Office of Research Services  
Behavioural Research Ethics Board  
Suite 102, 6190 Agronomy Road, Vancouver, B.C. V6T 1Z3  

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL - FULL BOARD  

<table>
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<th>PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:</th>
<th>INSTITUTION / DEPARTMENT:</th>
<th>UBC BREB NUMBER:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Duanduan Li</td>
<td>UBC/Arts/Asian Studies</td>
<td>H10-00806</td>
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INSTITUTION(S) WHERE RESEARCH WILL BE CARRIED OUT:  

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Other locations where the research will be conducted:  
Homes or offices of the proposed interview participants  

CO-INVESTIGATOR(S):  

Patricia Duff  
Hong Jiang  

SPONSORING AGENCIES:  

N/A  

PROJECT TITLE:  
A Social-historical Study of Chinese Heritage Language Education in British Columbia  

REB MEETING DATE:  
April 8, 2010  

CERTIFICATE EXPIRY DATE:  
April 8, 2011  

DATE APPROVED:  
May 13, 2010  

DOCUMENTS INCLUDED IN THIS APPROVAL:  

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The application for ethical review and the document(s) listed above have been reviewed and the procedures were found to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.

Approval is issued on behalf of the Behavioural Research Ethics Board and signed electronically by one of the following:  

Dr. M. Judith Lynam, Chair  
Dr. Ken Craig, Chair  
Dr. Jim Rupert, Associate Chair  
Dr. Laurie Ford, Associate Chair  
Dr. Anita Ho, Associate Chair
Appendix B: Informed Consent Form

Consent Form

Project Title: A Socio-Historical Analysis of Chinese Heritage Language Education in British Columbia

Principal Investigator: Dr. Duanduan Li, Dept. of Asian Studies, Faculty of Arts.
Co-Investigator: Dr. Patricia Duff, Dept. of Language and Literacy Education, Faculty of Education.
Co-Investigator: Hong Jiang, Dept. of Asian Studies, Faculty of Arts.

Purpose:
The purpose of this research is to provide sociolinguistic and historical perspectives of Chinese heritage language (CHL) education in British Columbia, especially in Vancouver.

Participation and Procedures:
As a HL educator of Chinese, you are invited to take part in a one-hour interview with Hong Jiang, a graduate student of Dr. Li and Dr. Duff. The interview will be tape-recorded by the researcher. The tapes will then be transcribed for data analysis purposes.

Confidentiality:
The participants will be promised confidentiality as the names of the interviewees will be replaced by pseudonyms in any publications so you will remain anonymous. The data collected (audio-tapes) will be stored in a locked filing cabinet. Computer files will be saved on discs and stored in the same cabinet.

Contact Information:
If you have any further questions or concerns please contact Hong Jiang at the address above. If you have more specific concerns about your rights as a research subject please contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at the University of British Columbia at (604) 822-8598. If you wish to learn about the results of the study, you may also contact Hong Jiang.

Consent:
Please note that you are under no obligation to participate and will be able to withdraw from the study at any time. By signing below you indicate that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records and also indicate that you are consenting to participate in the study.

________________________ _________________________
Participant Signature Date

________________________
Printed name of the participant signing above

Please return this copy to the researcher.
Appendix C: Interview Questions

1. Please introduce yourself.
2. When did you start to teach Chinese?
3. Where are you teaching?
4. How successful is/was your program? (e.g. examples?)
5. Which aspects are you most satisfied with your program?
6. How many students did you have at the beginning? How did the number increase over the years?
7. How many Chinese teachers are there in your school now?
8. Where did the teachers come from?
9. What were the criteria for the schools to hire the teachers?
10. What kind of classes have you been teaching?
11. Which language, Cantonese or Mandarin, did you teach? In what written form, traditional or simplified?
12. Why did you choose this language variety?
13. What about the students’ background? Did they use this variety at home?
14. Which language skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing) do you think the students need to improve the most? Why?
15. What are/were the extra-curriculum activities in your school? What do you think the students liked the most?
16. Do your students use Chinese language on the computer?
17. Why do you think parents sent their children to learn Chinese?
18. Why did you think kids should learn Chinese in Canada?
19. Why do you think they choose your program? What’s the special feature in your school that was attractive to the parents?

20. How about students’ attitudes towards Chinese language learning?

21. Did they like attending Chinese classes at the beginning? How about now?

22. What motivate your students to learn Chinese?

23. Have students’ motivation and attitude towards Chinese learning changed recently? If so, what are the changes and what may be the reasons?

24. What’s the students/parents’ ultimate goal of learning Chinese?

25. When your students talked to each other inside/outside the classroom, do they speak in English or Chinese? Do you know why?

26. Do your students use Chinese to enjoy pop culture? (Magazines, movies, TV shows, Karaoke, cartoons, video games etc.)

27. Could you tell me some successful/unsuccesful stories of your students’ Chinese learning?

28. What could count for their success/un-success?

29. What was the most difficult thing at the beginning of running your program?

30. How did you deal with it?

31. What is the most challenging part in running a Chinese program now?

32. Chinese language education is thriving in BC now, what do you think the pushing factors are?

33. What’s your opinion about the Chinese language’s entering BC’s public schools?

34. What are the major obstacles that prevent the implement of Chinese programs in the public education system?
35. In your opinion, what are the differences between the programs in public schools and the ones in community Chinese schools?

36. How can the government assist CHL education?

37. What is your future view of CHL education in BC?