

Heritage Language Fluency: Effects on Second Generation, Asian American Youth's Bicultural Identity

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ABSTRACT

This paper studies the bicultural experiences of second generation, Asian American high schoolers, specifically regarding heritage language. As this population is constantly in different environments where they have to adhere to different cultural contexts, many disconnects have continuously raised due to cultural gaps or clashes. Among these cultural disconnects is language disparities between that of the host and heritage country. Thus, the objective of this paper was to examine the relationship between fluency of heritage language and this demographic's bicultural identity through a mixed-method survey. After conducting correlational and thematic analysis of the results, it was found that while significant commonalities are present in perspectives toward heritage language, there were unique intricacies within each data set that were molded by participants' personal experiences and situations. Thus, from the data collected, heritage language fluency does play a part in shaping bicultural identity, but there is a lack of direct correlation. Asian American youth's bicultural experiences and other fundamental aspects like assimilation pressures and surrounding communities work in conjunction with language to impact the bicultural experience. Therefore, considering the diverse sources of assimilation pressures, a cross-context collaboration is needed, where heritage language learning is supported and valued.

Introduction

The population of Asian Americans is the fastest-increasing minority group in the United States (U.S.), encompassing around 20 million people and expected to nearly double by 2050 (Cheung and Swank, 2019, p. 89). Biculturalism can be defined as "...the personal blend of one's cultural heritage and lived experiences...[It] is about a reconciliation of one's cultures to forge a...unique identity" (Myerson et al., 2022). Second generation immigrants in the U.S., who are categorized as children of first-generation immigrants, constantly experience biculturalism. They find themselves in varying environments where they have to adhere to different cultural contexts between the host country and heritage country, which are defined as the environment in which the individual was raised and the country that the individual's parents immigrated from, respectively (Altweck and Marshall, 2015, p. 2).

There is a gap present within the topic of biculturalism, particularly for the group of second generation, Asian American high schoolers. There is a lack of extensive research done on how heritage language fluency affects their daily lives, perspectives, and behavioral choices in a bicultural environment. Heritage language can be defined as "...a language of particular personal and family relevance other than English" (Qian et al., 2022, p. 1382). Thus, the objective of this research paper is to look comprehensively into the relationship between fluency of heritage language and this specific demographic's bicultural identity through a mixed-method survey. It is hypothesized that there will be a direct correlation between heritage language fluency and bicultural identity, where the greater the heritage language fluency, the more positive bicultural experience one will have.

Literature Review

History of Diaspora in the United States

In order to thoroughly understand the bicultural identities that are prevalent across the U.S., it is critical to recognize the diasporic movement of immigrants into the country. Lisa Sun-Hee Park, Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Minnesota, highlights that although each immigrant story is unique to every person, there are apparent overarching similarities that can be discerned, as “[t]hese migration narrative constructions have a generic or formulaic quality. The stories could describe almost any immigrant group in almost any historical period” (Park, 2008, p. 136). The immigrant narrative is often along the lines of someone who was born in a poorer nation and migrates to America looking for better opportunities with the determination and diligent qualities associated with immigrants (Park, 2008, p. 136). Specifically looking into the Asian diaspora in Kaveri Hariss’ work, affiliated with University of Sussex, its “...wide-ranging volume...makes an important contribution to the historical sociology of transnational migration” (Hariss, 2009). It is important to keep in mind that the catalysis of diasporic movement is not limited to just cultural identity, but also is accompanied by history, power relations, and relations with the state (Hariss, 2009).

Asian American Identity & Alienation

With this context of how diaspora developed throughout the U.S., these diasporic populations began to cultivate their own unique cultural identities. However, due to these distinct identities that differ from the American lifestyle, traditions, and overall culture, many of these cultural groups feel perpetually foreign and alienated. Immigrants undergo constant doubt and justification of their presence in a foreign land (Park, 2008, p. 134). This extends into the second generation, where there is “...constant doubt and justification of their reasons for being in, not a foreign land, but their own land” (Park, 2008, p. 134). According to the Social Tracking of Asian Americans in the U.S. Index Report taken in 2022, “...only 19% of Asian Americans between the ages of 18 to 24 completely agree that they feel they belong and are accepted in the U.S.” (Namkung, 2022). Park draws from her research approach of narrative interviews, and highlights an underlying theme that racial stereotypes and assumptions “...not only [play] an ongoing role in perpetuating the marginal status of Asian Americans, but also in limiting the avenues for progressive social change among the second generation” (Park, 2008, p. 136).

In addition to the challenges Asian Americans face with their American identity, they face issues with the other part of their bicultural identity—their heritage culture. According to Analia F. Albuja of Rutgers University, bicultural individuals experience intermediary or “border identities” due to their intermediate position between two monocultural groups (Albuja et al., 2019, p. 1166). Often, there are “...ubiquitous implicit associations equating ‘American’ and ‘White’ [that] exclude bicultural Latino or Asian Americans who may identify as American but are often perceived as foreigners” (Albuja et al., 2019, p. 1166). This transcendent perception of what being ‘American’ means lays the foundation of the context in which identity denial and crises arise for bicultural adolescents. The dire effects it has on bicultural groups, especially Asian Americans, are evident through health implications such as slower reduction of cortisol reactivity after identity denial experiences, which over time could cause more severe issues (Albuja et al., 2019, p. 1182). From these dire consequences, the need for increased research surrounding this demographic is displayed.

Acculturation & Assimilation in Asian American Youth

Acculturation and assimilation provide set concepts to describe the behaviors of bicultural individuals adapting themselves to fit the societal culture. According to Yoseph Budiyanana of Soegijapranata Catholic University,

there is significant identity construction done through language, as people “...involve themselves in such linguistic events as reading books and magazines and listening to music” (Budiyana, 2017, p. 195). Due to the stresses that are put upon Asian American youth while navigating their bicultural identity, the resulting actions are acculturation and assimilation to the dominant culture, with acculturative stress having direct relations with their well-being, as found from a study conducted by Sung Man Bae of Dankook University (Bae, 2020, p. 56).

Further, according to Christopher Cheung, affiliated with University of Florida, Asian American youth tend to prefer U.S. culture while their parents stick with more traditional, heritage culture, causing heightened miscommunication, behavioral problems, and parent-child conflict (Cheung and Swank, 2019, p. 91). However, connecting with Yoonsun Choi’s study affiliated with the University of Chicago, Asian American youth often resist orientations to both their host and heritage culture, which “...highlights the need for more refined examination and analysis of Asian American acculturation...” (Choi et al., 2018, p. 2200).

Second Generation Youth Identity (Age Group Discussion)

Second generation immigrants have a very particular set of obstacles that they face, and consequently often experience more significant struggles with self-identification, emphasizing the need for further research on this group. Second generation youth experience acculturation and its effects differently from the first generation due to the values and norms they constantly run across from two often very different cultures (Cheung and Swank, 2019, p. 91). However, they are often more accustomed to American cultural practices because of exposure at school, with peers, and media. On the other hand, caregivers of these biculturals usually enforce their culture of origin's practices, values, and language at home, causing bicultural youth to have to “...learn to adapt their cultural orientation to fit different situations” (Cheung and Swank, 2019, p. 91). Therefore, youth who are involved with both cultures possess greater resilience, decreased problem behaviors, and heightened adjustment (Cheung and Swank, 2019, p. 90).

Furthermore, another spectrum of issues that arise from identity denial in bicultural youth is family conflict. Immigration can “...produce unanticipated stress associated with acculturation, differences in child-rearing beliefs and practices, and ethnic identity formation”, as mentioned in an article written by JoAnn M. Farver of University of Southern California (Farver et al., 2007, p. 205). Family conflict that arises from changes in the parent-child relationship as children become more vocal, expressive, and independent may make adolescence a difficult time for immigrant families (Farver et al., 2007, p. 205). To combat this, it has been found in a study conducted by Arizona State University’s Adriana Umaña-Taylor that stronger family ethnic socialization efforts during early childhood can prompt increased understanding and exploration of ethnicity, which can foster a more healthy relationship with their heritage culture in the long-term (Umaña-Taylor, 2014, p. 33).

Another distinct circumstance for second generation youth is the growing age of social media. Experts have pointed out that Generation Z (ages 11-26) Asian Americans feel less accepted than older generations in the U.S. due to feelings of marginalization and perpetual alienation, as well as social media’s spotlight on the recent exponential growth of anti-Asian hate (Namkung, 2022). With this technological advancement coming into play in the development of their bicultural identity, it is a new environment to navigate that previous generations did not encounter. These facets to the bicultural experience that second generation youth are facing are unique to their demographic, resulting in a current lack of developed analysis and data on their population group.

Addressing the Gap

As seen from previously published literature, there is an apparent lack of data on the direct perspectives and behavioral tendencies of second generation, Asian American youth (Cheung and Swank, 2019). Additionally, further research is needed for the specific variable of language and its effects on this demographic. By working with second generation, Asian American high school students through the data collection means of a mixed-

method survey, how heritage language fluency impacts this unique cultural group will be evaluated to fill the research gap. Thus, the research question is raised: How does the fluency of heritage language of second generation, Asian American high schoolers in Texas affect their bicultural identity?

Methodology

Sample Population

The sample population that the survey was distributed to was AP Capstone students at high schools in a suburban school district in northern Texas, where students completed the survey if they fit into the specified demographic description. The survey was distributed to students across this district through a list of other surveys created by AP Research students. Students were directed to complete the surveys during class. To ensure anonymity, participants were instructed not to put their names on the questionnaires.

Data Collection Design

The design of the research process was non-experimental, as the research collected data based on a natural variable. For the topics of cultural identity and biculturalism, typically what is studied is the current climate of the topic as it is, instead of manipulating aspects of it.

A mixed-method survey is utilized, where a combination of both quantitative and qualitative questions are incorporated, specifically consisting of open-ended questions purposed to reveal opinions, experiences, and narratives, as well as questions based on 5-point scale. Due to a survey's high level of flexibility and personalization, there was appeal in having choice over formatting, the kinds of questions asked, and aesthetics. It is difficult to quantify cultural identity and cultural experiences, as these are highly personal concepts that vary from person to person. The main motivation behind this combination of qualitative and quantitative questions is to ensure that the level of depth and complexity in the data needed is achieved in order to proceed with a sophisticated discussion and analysis.

Furthermore, the method development was guided by previously-existing studies in this field of inquiry. In a report by Guang-Lea Lee and Abha Gupta, both affiliated with Old Dominion University, investigating Korean first-generation immigrant parents' cultural perspectives and language practices they use to raise their children, questionnaires and unstructured interviews completed by 40 parents residing in low Korean immigrant population areas were utilized. By analyzing the type of questions and answers that were produced from this study, aspects of what was most effective from the author's work could be implemented into developing the method design. Based on the themes and questions observed from previous studies, an original series of mixed-method questions was crafted, as seen in the Appendix.

Procedure

The survey was designed into three main sections: the first consisted of open-ended questions asking basic information about the participant, such as what their heritage and host languages were; the second section consisted of questions based on a 5-point scale regarding the severity or frequency of different experiences or feelings; the third section consisted of qualitative, open-ended questions about the participant's experiences, opinions, and thoughts. The quantitative data was then preprogrammed to be converted into bar graphs or pie charts based on the individual question.

The collected quantitative data would then be analyzed for any numerical, correlational trends, while the qualitative data would be observed for any overarching themes and shared experiences. This will be carried out

through a text analysis of the open-ended responses. Utilizing the software JMP, a software program that allows for various statistical analyses, the text mining feature will be integrated to independently classify, sort, and extract information from text to efficiently identify patterns, relationships, and shared sentiments. Furthermore, the histograms feature will be used to analyze the scaled questions. Putting the data through a histogram display helps in understanding the distribution of variables among participant responses, while highlighting correlations between specific variables and aspects of bicultural identity and environment. It allows for the visualization of parts of histogram to dynamically link data to corresponding rows in the data table. By clicking on a bar in one histogram highlights the corresponding bars in the other histograms, it allows to see connections and relationships between various bicultural variables (settings, feelings, experiences, etc.).

Results

The first section of the survey gathered basic information about each participants' cultural background. Table 1 below gives an overview of the demographic information of the participant pool.

Table 1. Basic demographics of participant pool.

Host Language	Count	Percent (%)	Years	Count	Percent (%)
English	291	93.9%	6	1	0.3%
Telegu	7	2.3%	8	1	0.3%
Hindi	2	0.6%	9	2	0.6%
Korean	2	0.6%	10	13	4.2%
Marathi	1	0.3%	11	12	3.9%
Punjabi	1	0.3%	12	18	5.8%
Chinese	1	0.3%	13	23	7.4%
Tulu	1	0.3%	13.5	2	0.6%
Urdu	1	0.3%	14	38	12.3%
[RED.] ¹	3	1.0%	15	77	24.8%
Total	310		16	55	17.7%
			17	29	9.4%
			18	6	1.9%
			[RED.] ¹	33	10.6%
			Total	310	

¹Several answers were redacted in the process of data cleansing, as they were not appropriate or relevant to the research.

As displayed in the 'Years' column in Table 1, nearly all participants have been speaking their host language for more than ten years or their entire life. If participants have been speaking for under ten years, all responses were over five years of speaking their host language. For participants' heritage language, many have also been speaking for over ten years. However, a small percentage put down zero years or that they cannot speak it at all. A small percentage also highlighted that they could only speak it during their early childhood years, and then lost the ability to speak, making the years of speaking limited compared to their host language. Most participants speak a combination of their host and heritage languages at home, or the dominant language is

simply the heritage language. Many responses highlighted that their parents speak in their heritage language, while the participant responds in English or basic heritage language. In the second set of questions, questions were asked on a 5-point scale. Shown in Table 2, the percentage distribution of each question can be observed.

Several percentages were principal in drawing connections and a line of reasoning among the data set. For example, a stark majority, or 92.6%, said they are completely fluent in their host language fluency, rating their fluency a 5 out of 1-5. The distribution for heritage language fluency was much more varied, only 25.1% rated their fluency a 5, with the highest percentage of 34.4% falling at a rating of 4. When asked about how often participants communicate with their parents in their heritage language, the highest percentage, 33.1%, responded with a 4, while 22.8% responded with a 3 and 20.9% responded with a 5.

A notable 67.8% of respondents chose a rating of 1 when asked about the significance of the barrier that language acts between them and their parents. In a similar arena, when asked about how significantly language acts as a barrier between the participants and their cultural identity in general, the highest percentage, or 33.8%, chose 1, while 26.4% chose a rating of 3, and 24.4% chose a rating of 2. In the context of insecurity and heritage language fluency, 41.8% chose a rating of 1, indicating that they feel no sense of insecurity regarding their heritage language fluency.

When comparing assimilation to both host and heritage cultures, a slightly greater percentage of participants felt a higher pressure to conform to their heritage culture, with 48.5% choosing a range of 3-5 for host culture, and 51.7% choosing the same range for heritage culture. When asked about how pressured participants feel about becoming more fluent at their heritage language, most did not feel significant pressure, with 27.3% saying they felt no pressure at all. Despite a majority feeling a small-scale amount of pressure, most participants wanted to become more fluent in their heritage language from a personal standpoint, with over a third (38.3%) of respondents choosing a ranking of 5.

The last section of the survey was composed of a set of questions prompting open-ended, written responses from the participants, as shown in Table 3 below. The top ten most frequently used terms are presented; if a dot is present after the word, that indicates it acts as a stem, meaning words with identical stems but differing endings were grouped together. "Count" refers to the total number of times a term was recorded among the responses including if it was written several times, while "Document Count" refers to the total number of times a term was recorded in each response.

Table 2. Percentage distribution of scaled questions (1-5).

Scale ²	B1	B2	B3	B4	B5	B6	B7	B8	B9	B10	B11	B12	B13	B14	B15	B16
1	0.3%	2.9%	5.5%	2.3%	7.4%	67.7%	47.4%	9.7%	14.5%	33.6%	41.6%	42.3%	27.4%	5.5%	35.5%	29.7%
2	0.0%	7.7%	9.7%	1.9%	15.8%	17.7%	32.6%	15.5%	23.2%	24.5%	21.6%	21.0%	22.6%	5.2%	16.1%	18.4%
3	1.6%	30.0%	26.1%	9.7%	22.9%	7.4%	12.6%	29.4%	29.7%	26.5%	15.2%	23.9%	22.9%	21.0%	22.6%	28.4%
4	5.5%	34.2%	30.0%	32.3%	32.9%	5.2%	4.8%	27.7%	23.2%	13.6%	15.2%	9.7%	17.7%	30.0%	17.7%	18.4%
5	92.6%	25.2%	28.7%	53.9%	21.0%	1.9%	2.6%	17.7%	9.4%	1.9%	6.5%	3.2%	9.4%	38.4%	8.1%	5.2%

²5-point scale depending on the severity or frequency of different bicultural aspects, experiences, feelings.

Table 3. Text analysis of open-ended responses.

Question	Term	Count	Document Count	³ Percent (%)
C1. In what environments do you feel most pressured to culturally assimilate (i.e. home, school, religious events, etc.), and to which culture (heritage or host)?	school	117	116	37.4%
	host	108	102	32.9%
	religious events	108	99	31.9%
	home	57	55	17.7%
	language	34	27	8.7%
	family	22	19	6.1%
	india	22	21	6.8%
	people	16	14	4.5%
	visit	12	12	3.9%
C2. Why do you or why do you not believe familiarity and fluency with one's heritage language is important?	relat	10	10	3.2%
	connection	173	130	41.9%
	culture	137	119	38.4%
	family	50	44	14.2%
	communication	45	45	14.5%
	identity	45	42	13.5%
C3. What obstacles do you face when speaking or learning your heritage language? How do you overcome these obstacles?	roots	20	20	6.5%
	generations	14	14	4.5%
	relatives	12	12	3.9%
	parents	11	10	3.2%
	sense	11	11	3.5%
	speaking	165	116	37.4%
	understand	57	48	15.5%
	parents	55	54	17.4%
	english	49	39	12.6%
	ask	42	41	13.2%
C4. At what age do you believe you began to decline in heritage language fluency, and why did it occur at this specific age?	practice	22	19	6.1%
	writing	22	18	5.8%
	reading	20	16	5.2%
	family	17	15	4.8%
	pronunciation	17	15	4.8%
	school	104	88	28.4%
	english	82	70	22.6%
	middle	25	25	8.1%
	moved	25	25	8.1%
	american	23	22	7.1%
	elementary	21	20	6.5%
	C5. Where are the most significant sources of pressure coming from regarding cultural assimilation?	parents	20	19
host		17	17	5.5%
india		14	12	3.9%
fluent		12	12	3.9%
family		69	62	20.0%
school		61	58	18.7%
peers		59	53	17.1%
parents		40	38	12.3%
media		38	24	7.7%
language		30	22	7.1%
events		13	12	3.9%
grandparents		12	11	3.5%
C6. What other aspect(s) of your bicultural identity do you believe is the greatest factor in maintaining positive relationships with your heritage culture?		religious	11	11
	around	9	9	2.9%
	language	102	69	22.3%
	traditions	57	47	15.2%
	family	40	38	12.3%
	religion	40	37	11.9%
	food	35	33	10.6%
	relationships	35	34	11.0%
events	21	20	6.5%	

	parents	21	21	6.8%
	people	20	20	6.5%
	identity	17	17	5.5%
C7. Describe an example of a time when heritage language was an obstacle for you.	communicating	254	171	55.2%
	visited	124	83	26.8%
	understanding	74	64	20.6%
	grandparents	50	50	16.1%
	family	43	39	12.6%
	english	27	24	7.7%
	relatives	18	18	5.8%
	accent	10	9	2.9%
	parents	10	10	3.2%
	something	10	9	2.9%
C8. What are some strategies you use when speaking or learning your heritage language?	speak	113	95	30.6%
	movies	57	36	11.6%
	parents	55	54	17.4%
	ask for help	36	24	7.7%
	listen	29	29	9.4%
	english	22	22	7.1%
	songs	9	9	2.9%
	family	8	8	2.6%
	grandparents	8	8	2.6%
	home	8	8	2.6%
C9. In the future, are you going to take any action in improving your heritage language fluency? If so, what do you plan on doing?	speaking	75	69	22.3%
	parents	34	34	11.0%
	reading	29	21	6.8%
	classes	24	24	7.7%
	time	19	16	5.2%
	practice	18	18	5.8%
	writing	16	15	4.8%
	family	13	13	4.2%
	home	12	12	3.9%
	already	8	8	2.6%
C10. Do you have any other recommendations for second generation, Asian American high school students who are struggling with navigating their cultural identity,	speak	49	41	13.2%
	ask for help	33	17	5.5%
	parents	27	26	8.4%
	identity	16	14	4.5%
	family	15	15	4.8%
	practice	13	13	4.2%
	friends	11	10	3.2%
	home	9	9	2.9%
specifically in a linguistic context?	movies	8	8	2.6%
	effort	7	4	1.3%

³Percentages were calculated utilizing the “Document Count” values and the total number of responses (310) for accuracy. The disparity between “Document Count” and “Count” is accredited to participants using words multiple times in one response.

As shown from Table 3, the primary sources of assimilation for heritage culture were religious communities, parents, elders, and peers, while school, peers, and media were the main pressures for host culture assimilation. Virtually all participants believe that familiarity and fluency with heritage language is important, with the main shared sentiments being the importance of passing on culture to subsequent generations, being able to communicate with others around them, and remaining connected with their family’s background.

When discussing obstacles when speaking or learning heritage language, forefront issues that many participants run into are limited vocabulary and grammatical skills, pronunciation, and not being able to fully express themselves due to this limit of language. Most participants began to experience heritage language loss during a new marker of their educational progress, such as the start of primary school, middle school, or high school. Common experiences involving when heritage language was an obstacle for participants mostly involved communication with relatives, particularly grandparents or extended family living in the mother country.

Furthermore, a majority of respondents use strategies to maintain heritage language fluency by speaking with family members and ethnically-similar friends. When asked about future plans in improving their heritage language fluency, the responses were quite mixed, ranging from having no plans, to an answer dependent on how much availability and time they have, to active plans on studying and engaging in the language on a deeper level.

Discussion

Cultural Assimilation Sources

According to the pool of second generation Asian American high school students that took the survey, the primary sources of pressure to assimilate to the heritage culture were religious communities, family, elders, and peers. This is consistent with previous studies, as efforts to maintain heritage language and culture occur through “...intense communication among family members and friends, language instruction at school, and church activities”, where religious celebrations and gatherings cause second generation children to gain the language (Budiyana, 2017, p. 197). Due to parents being first generation immigrants and being raised in the mother country, many households are predominantly based on the heritage language customs. By continuing to speak in the heritage language despite the child’s heritage language fluency, continuing heritage culture traditions, and acting on heritage language norms establishes an environment of cultural pressure at home. In a similar manner, elders are a significant source of heritage culture assimilation pressure for second generation youth as well. Growing up and being accustomed to the ways of the heritage culture, older generations tend to be more conservative and traditional in their lifestyle to stay with the ways of the heritage country. They hold expectations toward subsequent generations to uphold strong relationships and understanding of the heritage culture. Many responses in the survey when discussing elders as an assimilation pressure highlighted how not being able to communicate with their grandparents and extended family put a strain on their relationship and connection with their heritage cultural experience.

The primary sources of pressure to assimilate to the host culture were school, peers, and forms of media. Affirmed by previously published literature, “[u]pon entering English dominant school and society, these children feel more pressured to focus on developing English than maintaining [heritage language]” (Lee and Gupta, 2020, p. 521). Interacting with peers, teachers, and other staff at school through American customs and predominantly English, students feel the heightened need to depict themselves into the norms of the American school culture surrounding them, particularly when many of their peers are not of the same racial background. This source of assimilation works in conjunction with peers causing assimilation, as behaviors observed of their peers serves as a considerable influence in how they decide their own actions and how they decipher what is culturally appropriate

or acceptable.

Another principal source of pressure for students to assimilate to host culture is through media, such as social media, movies, news, and books. The cultural representation or lack thereof in these channels can be a serious factor in shaping Asian American youth's views on their heritage backgrounds and how others view them. If done defectively, the media exposure for the demographic can invoke feelings of embarrassment, shame, or exclusion, damaging their relationship with their heritage culture and pressuring them to become more like the more socially- acceptable and normalized host culture.

When prompted to respond regarding when heritage language loss first began occurring and what was the most significant source of cause, many participants mentioned entering the formal education system in America led them to have a notable decline in the fluency of their heritage language. This theme falls in alignment with school being a primary source of assimilation to conform to the participants' host culture. Due to many schools being structured based on American culture and being taught foundational cultural elements through school from an early age, it is natural to begin feeling a disconnect from the heritage culture from before entering the education system. Further, interacting with other peers and developing relationships outside of the family based on host culture foundations leads to a dependency on conforming to host culture conventions and social norms in the early stages of development as well.

Effects of Heritage Language on Bicultural Identity

From the collected quantitative data from the scaled questions, there is not a clear correlation between heritage language fluency and a negative bicultural experience or relationship with the participants' bicultural identity. For instance, although a significant percentage of participants ranged from a fluency level of 1-3 (40.6%), most (85.4%) did not feel as though their fluency level was a hindrance to their cultural identity (scale 1-2). In addition, 67.8% of respondents said that heritage language fluency is not in any way a barrier between them and their parents, despite only 25.1% being fully fluent. Similarly, when asked about how significantly language acts as a barrier between the participants and their cultural identity in general, about a third of respondents, or 33.8%, said there was no barrier whatsoever. Furthermore, 41.8% of participants indicated that they felt no sense of insecurity regarding their heritage language fluency.

While the statistical elements of the survey seem to show a weaker correlation between heritage language fluency and impact on second generation, Asian American high schoolers' bicultural identity, the qualitative, open-ended responses show much clearer themes and effects on their everyday lives and relationships with their environment and the people around them.

Perception on Future Cultural Connection

When asked about participants' thoughts and opinions on their future relationship and experience with their heritage culture, many said that they were planning on actively studying and engaging in learning their heritage language for the purpose of staying connected with their culture and being able to pass along the language and culture to their children and subsequent generations. It was clear that heritage culture maintenance in general was important and a forefront concern for many second-generation Asian American youth that responded to the survey. Thus, maintaining the heritage language was a theme present throughout the responses that a high percentage wanted to keep. Through their lack of heritage language, many pointed out that they would not be able to teach and pass it on to their children, and therefore that critical aspect of cultural heritage and connection would be lost.

Strategies & Solutions for Heritage Language Maintenance

Pulling from the survey responses, participants were asked what strategies they utilize to maintain heritage language fluency. Many participants placed emphasis on continuing to converse and communicate with their parents through heritage language instead of host language. Some also mentioned interacting with ethnically similar peers through their heritage language was also a primary strategy used. According to the data collected, there was a clear positive direct relationship with heritage language fluency and amount of media interaction and exposure, as well as the presence of cultural community. Thus, engaging with more media in the heritage language, as well as having a strong community with the shared heritage culture could improve heritage language fluency, maintenance, and overall relationship with Asian American youth's bicultural identity.

However, considering the diverse sources of host culture assimilation pressures, it is inadequate to simply suggest further interactions with groups of people through heritage language. Therefore, a "cross-context collaboration" is imperative, where families, mainstream schools, and local ethnic communities must collaboratively support immigrant children's heritage language learning and create a positive environment where linguistic diversity is valued (Lee and Gupta, 2020, p. 528).

Conclusion

To answer the research question, "How does the fluency of heritage language of second generation, Asian American high schoolers in Texas affect their bicultural identity?", this research found that while significant commonalities are present in their perspectives and experiences regarding heritage language fluency, there were unique intricacies within each data set that were molded by participants' personal experiences.

The main sources of assimilation were highlighted, accentuating the need for combating host cultural assimilation from its primary channels to alleviate the cultural conflicts and struggles with cultural identity navigation for many Asian American youth. Furthermore, this study has multiple implications for the role of heritage language fluency in bicultural identity, as there is an overall positive sentiment shared regarding its significance. Most participants view it as a principal aspect of cultural understanding, and through a variety of strategies and solutions, a majority of participants claimed to pursue its maintenance in the future. It can be implied that efforts and consciousness around efforts for heritage language maintenance will persist as this generation develops.

Limitation

The narrow participant pool poses a limitation to the study, as participants are pulled from one district high school program in Texas. Due to all of the respondents of the survey being from the same area, it would be inaccurate to use the themes and conclusions drawn from the survey as a generalization for the second generation, Asian American high school student population as a whole. What remains true for this particular participant pool may differ for other groups in varying geographic areas due to differing environments, economic status, and surrounding demographics.

Recommendations for Future Research

It would be useful in future research to examine how heritage language fluency affects the bicultural identity of second generation, Asian American high schoolers in different geographic areas. Other areas may have a greater or less amount of Asian populace that affect assimilation pressures and experiences with language. Furthermore, there are evident main sources of cultural pressures for bicultural youth, so more focused studies on these specified

environments and relationships are recommended. As seen from the implications, heritage language and its role in shaping the experiences of Asian American youth is significant, and thus such furthered research could lead to meaningful understanding of cultural experience and identity for Asian American youth, and contribute to the empowerment of following generations and the maintenance of the diversity that characterizes our humanity.

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