

NEGOTIATED IDENTITIES OF SECOND-GENERATION VIETNAMESE HERITAGE
SPEAKERS: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE MULTILINGUAL COMPOSITION
CLASSROOM

by

Tom H. Do

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As members of the Dissertation Committee, we certify that we have read the dissertation prepared by Tom Do, titled Negotiated Identities of Second-Generation Vietnamese Heritage Speakers: Implications for the Multilingual Composition Classroom and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Thomas P. Miller

Date: (April 20, 2015)

Linda R. Waugh

Date: (April 20, 2015)

Thomas P. Miller

Date: (April 20, 2015)

Victor Villanueva, Jr.

Date: (April 20, 2015)

Final approval and acceptance of this dissertation is contingent upon the candidate's submission of the final copies of the dissertation to the Graduate College.

I hereby certify that I have read this dissertation prepared under my direction and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement.

Dissertation Director: Thomas P. Miller

Date: (April 20, 2015)

STATEMENT BY AUTHOR

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SIGNED: Tom H. Do

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES.....	8
ABSTRACT.....	9
CHAPTER 1: THE STATE OF HERITAGE LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE AMONG VIETNAMESE AMERICANS.....	10
A Brief History of Vietnamese Immigration.....	13
Population Growth of Asian Population from 2000-2010.....	16
Growth in the Number of Speakers of a Language Other than English.....	19
Defining Heritage Languages and Heritage Language Speaker.....	23
Language Shift.....	28
English Only, Heritage Languages and Rhetoric and Composition.....	32
Theorizing Identities: A New Framework for Understanding Heritage Speakers.....	35
Current Research.....	42
Participants.....	42
Data Collection Procedures.....	43
Data Analysis.....	45
Outline of Chapters.....	45
CHAPTER 2: HERITAGE LANGUAGES, INVESTMENT, AND NEGOTIATED IDENTITIES.....	48
Sociopsychological Approaches to Language and Identity.....	49
Theories of Language Learning, Investment and Identity.....	52
Language Ideology and De-legitimized Identities.....	54
Investment, Heritage Language Learning, and Multiple Identities.....	63
A Linguistic Margarita: Code Meshing and the Negotiation of Multiple Identities.....	72
Conclusion.....	77
CHAPTER 3: “YOU’RE NOT VIETNAMESE”: PERIPHERAL ACCESS, LEARNING AND EVOLVING IDENTITIES.....	79
Language Proficiency and Participation in Group.....	81
Peripheral Participation as a Way of Learning.....	82
Participation, Imagined Communities, and Learning Investment.....	86
Participation, Learning, and Identities.....	88
No Access Allowed: Marginalization and Non-Participation of Non-Members.....	101
Imagined Communities, Participation, and Non-Participation.....	109
Imagined Communities and the Future.....	119
Conclusion.....	121
CHAPTER 4: HERITAGE SPEAKERS’ LANGUAGE BROKERING AS AIDE TO FAMILY’S ADAPTABILITY AND SURVIVAL.....	123
Language Brokering.....	124
Traditional Vietnamese Socialization Practices.....	126
On Becoming a Language Broker.....	129

Renegotiating Identities in Language Brokering.....	133
Feelings of Frustration.....	135
Just Another Responsibility: The Non-Adultification of Language Brokering.....	146
Conclusion.....	150
CHAPTER 5: “OH!!! YOU’RE ASIAN!!!” STANDARD ENGLISH AS MICROAGGRESSION.....	152
An Exceptional English Speaker: A Focus on Racialized Identities.....	153
Language Differences in Rhet/Comp.....	158
Rhet/Comp and the Translingual Turn.....	163
Conclusion.....	165
Closing Remarks.....	166
REFERENCES.....	168

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 1.....	13
TABLE 2.....	17
TABLE 3.....	19
TABLE 4.....	22

ABSTRACT

Grounded in interdisciplinary scholarship to include rhetoric and composition, applied linguistics, and heritage languages, my dissertation, *Negotiated Identities of Second-Generation Vietnamese Heritage Speakers: Implications for the Multilingual Composition Classroom*, is a qualitative study that explores how Vietnamese heritage speakers negotiate multiple identities in different social contexts. I define heritage speakers as asymmetrical bilinguals who were raised in a non-English speaking household but whose dominant language is now English. While findings from this study reveal that heritage speakers struggle to claim a linguistic identity because of discrimination from members of different Vietnamese communities, they nonetheless—through reflexive and interactive positioning—resist these communities’ discriminatory practices by constructing and negotiating multiple identities that enable them to reimagine themselves as legitimate members of an imagined Vietnamese community. By focusing on speakers’ negotiated identities, this dissertation departs from the traditional emphasis in heritage language and composition studies that equate language proficiency with cultural identity. Instead, it calls for a more nuanced understanding of identity formation that not only engages speakers’ multiple spheres of belonging but also informs current pedagogical practices that seek to incorporate speakers’ heritage languages as linguistic resources in the composition classroom.

CHAPTER 1
THE STATE OF HERITAGE LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE AMONG
VIETNAMESE AMERICANS

I don't understand what [other Vietnamese people are] saying, and I don't have [the] language ability to reply since I speak Vietnamese like a child. Whenever I find out they'll be hanging in a group, I try to avoid them. It makes me reflect on how I'm ethnically Vietnamese but culturally American. –Kate

Kate, a participant in my study, made herself comfortable in a small office in Modern Languages. She sat cross-legged on a cushiony, sea blue chair while I took my seat next to her and prepared the equipment for the interview. Sitting cross-legged, she seemed comfortable as she waited patiently for me to fire off my set of open-ended questions. Kate was a rather quiet individual who tended not to waste words, so I was surprised when she talked at length about her social relationship with other Vietnamese. She vividly painted a picture of her struggles to communicate with others because she did not have the language proficiency. Her inability to effectively communicate with others made her “reflect on how I'm ethnically Vietnamese but culturally American.” Kate's experience highlights the connections between language and the negotiation of identities. Her statement struck a chord with me, and I paused momentarily to reflect upon my experiences as a Vietnamese American—one who, much like Kate, negotiated multiple identities. On the one hand, I was ethnically Vietnamese, but because I did not speak the language, I, on the other hand, saw myself as culturally American. Because I neither understood myself as being fully Vietnamese nor fully American, this meant denying the either/or dichotomy and embracing the both/and. As Licona (2005) argues, “I am not

either/or but instead both/and,” (p. 105), and, for this reason, I see myself as a “(b)orderlands’ being” (p. 105).

Embracing the both/and, I have accepted the contradictions and inconsistencies as part of how I negotiate my identities. Even though, for instance, that I do not speak the language, I still identify as bilingual—a contradiction where I claim a linguistic identity that exists in my mind, but not in my tongue (Chiang & Schmida, 2011). For speakers like Kate and me, we are regarded by the academic literature as heritage speakers. Heritage language speakers, a term I will further elaborate in this chapter, may speak or simply have a cultural connection to their HL (Fishman, 2001). Because of the experiences of HL speakers like Kate and me, I am intrigued by the sociocultural dimensions of HL language proficiency and identity construction. Generally, scholars in the field of heritage languages have argued that speakers’ proficiency in their heritage language affects HL speakers’ ethnic identity and social relationships. They posit HL speakers who are proficiency and fluent in their HL maintain strong ethnic identities and ties with targeted language speakers. Conversely, HL speakers who lack proficiency and fluency in the HL were associated with a poor ethnic identity and weak social relationships. While these studies shed light on important aspects of HL loss on ethnic identity development and social interaction, they do not consider the range of identities that HL speakers assume and negotiate in communicative interactions. In communicative interaction, HL speakers constantly negotiate multiple identities to position themselves and position others within the interaction. This research is a qualitative study that explores the ways in which second-generation Vietnamese heritage speakers construct identities inconsistent with their language practices in various social contexts—contexts

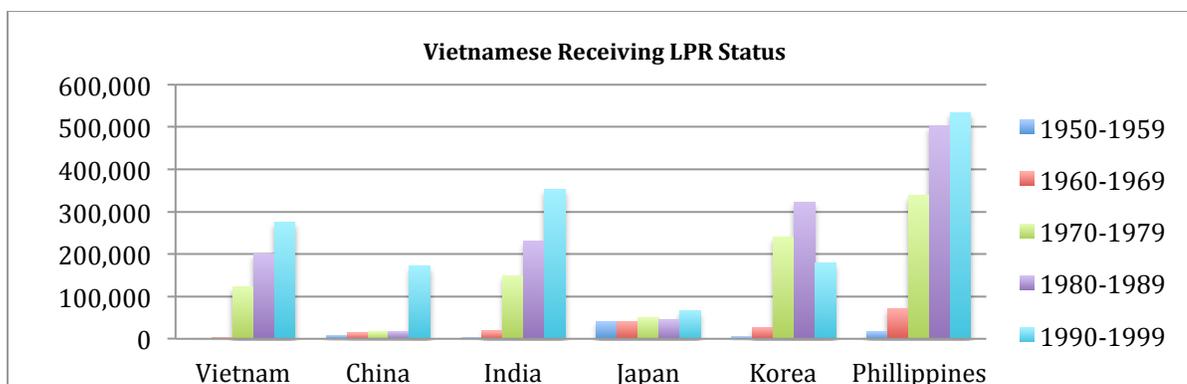
that are often characterized by inequitable power relations. While findings from this study reveal that heritage speakers struggle to claim a linguistic identity because of discrimination from members of their ethnic community, they nonetheless—through reflexive and interactive positioning—resist their community’s discriminatory practices by constructing and negotiating multiple identities that enable them to reimagine themselves as legitimate members of an imagined Vietnamese community. By focusing on speakers’ negotiated identities, this dissertation departs from the traditional emphasis in heritage language and composition studies that equates language proficiency with cultural identity. Instead, it calls for a more nuanced understanding of identity formation that not only engages speakers’ multiple spheres of belonging but also informs current pedagogical practices that seek to incorporate speakers’ heritage languages as linguistic resources in the composition classroom. The present study, therefore, analyzes the narratives of four second-generation Vietnamese heritage speakers. I argue that such narratives, which are seldomly heard and rarely analyzed, offers scholars in the field of rhetoric and composition an understanding of how different language communities structure opportunities for heritage language maintenance (Norton, 1995; 2000).

In this chapter, I first provide a brief historical account of Vietnamese immigration in the U.S, and I examine recent U.S. Census information that shows a growing population of Vietnamese. After examining statistics from the U.S. Census, I introduce the concept of heritage language and their speaker. I conclude this chapter by showing the connections between the fields of rhetoric and composition and heritage language.

A Brief History of Vietnamese Immigration

According to reports obtained by the United States Department of Justice, records of Vietnamese obtaining legal permanent resident (LPR) status in the United States do not exist for the periods from 1820 to 1949. The decade of the 1950s marks the earliest records of Vietnamese receiving LPR status, with a total estimated population of 290 for the entire decade. During the 1960s, the number of Vietnamese obtaining LPR status increased to 2,949, yet, while this decade saw the Vietnamese population increased ten-fold (“Becoming An American,” 2008), the total Vietnamese population lagged far behind relative to other Asian groups from China, India, Japan, Korea, and the Philippines. Not until the 1970s did the United States witness the greatest increase in the number of Vietnamese people obtaining LPR status.

Table 1



As table 1 illustrates, the number of Vietnamese receiving LPR status significantly increased during the decades of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. The decade of the 1970s, for instance, witnessed 121,716 Vietnamese receiving LPR status, and in the generations that followed, until the late 1990s, the numbers have steadily risen to 200,632 and 275,379 during the 1980s and 1990s respectively. The unprecedented changes in the

number of Vietnamese receiving LPR status must be understood within the larger socio-political climate of Vietnam that gave rise to the influx of Vietnamese refugees who poured into United States in three distinct stages (Rutledge, 1992; Zhou & Bankston, 1998). By the mid 1970s, in their effort to unify Vietnam, the Vietminh—communist troops of North Vietnam—were at the cusp of defeating the US-backed South Vietnamese government. On April 30 1975, Saigon, the capitol of South Vietnam, was overrun by the communist troops and renamed Ho Chi Minh City. In the aftermath of the Vietnam War, panic ensued as many Vietnamese desperately sought to escape the war-ravaged country. In response to the political turmoil in Vietnam, the U.S. had planned evacuation efforts to aid military personnel, professionals, Catholics, business owners, and political officials of the defunct South Vietnamese government. At this time, approximately 125,000 of the first wave of Vietnamese refugees arrived America. (Rutledge, 1992; Kibria, 1993; Zhou & Bankston, 1998).

Those who did not escape during the first wave stayed behind and suffered social, economic, and political repression from the new communist regime. Military officers who supported and fought alongside the United States were imprisoned in political reeducation camps, which lasted months and even years. Life for southern Vietnamese who escaped imprisonment was an equally traumatic experience. Forced to settle in the New Economic Zone—war-torn, rural sectors of Vietnam that had been ravaged by natural disasters, bombing, and herbicide—Vietnamese of the now defunct southern government existed under constant threat of food shortage (Zhou & Bankston, 1998). In addition, continual war with China and Cambodia, along with social, economic, and political discrimination faced by ethnic minorities, such as the Chinese, the Cham, the

Khmer, and the Montagnards, produced a second wave of Vietnamese refugees who sought to escape the repressive regime by boat. By 1977, the exodus from Vietnam continued unabated, and the second and third waves of Vietnamese exiles, popularly known as the “boat people,” sought refuge in neighboring countries, such as Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, and Indonesia (Ruthledge, 1992). For many second and third wave Vietnamese refugees who ventured the risk of escaping by boat, approximately 50 percent survived and the rest “perished beneath the waves or at the hands of pirates” (Zhou & Bankston, 1998, p. 28).

Upon entry into the United States, the first wave of Vietnamese refugees in 1975 was housed in five reception centers stationed at Camp Pendleton, California, Fort Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania, Fort Chaffee, Arkansas, Eglin Air Force Base, Florida, and Guam (Zhou & Bankston, 1998). Coupled with the problem of the sudden influx of Vietnamese refugees, the U.S. government also contended with issues of resettlement. Unlike other immigrants who often arrive with well-established networks and ethnic communities, the Vietnamese refugees were without such networks upon which they could rely. This meant that “the U.S. government and the voluntary agencies working mainly under government contracts oversaw their resettlement and in most cases decided their destinations” (Zhou & Bankston, 1998, p. 45). The planned resettlement of the Vietnamese refugees and U.S. refugee policy were efforts to prevent the development of ethnic enclaves at “ports of entry” and to encourage “residential dispersion.” Furthermore, by dispersing Vietnamese refugees across the nation, the US government sought to discourage the formation of linguistic enclaves that may adversely impact local schools, social service programs, and economies (“Becoming An American,” 2008).

Despite such efforts, Vietnamese refugees, like most other ethnic groups, established residential patterns and large-scale networks of Vietnamese communities in places such as California, Texas, Washington, Florida, among others. Today, such well-established communities stand as a living testament to their resilience as they continue to thrive in many parts of the United States.

Population Growth of Asian Population from 2000 to 2010

The Asian population in the United States continues to experience exceptional growth. Between the years 2000-2010, the total US population grew from 281.4 million to 308.7 million, a growth of 9.7 percent (Hoeffel, Rastogi, Kim, & Shahid, 2012, p. 3). Of this entire population, 17.3 million people, or 5.6 percent, identified themselves as Asian. The racial marker “Asian” is an umbrella term used to identify many different Asian groups from the Far East, South East Asia, and the Indian subcontinent. The U.S. Census categorizes Asians under three groups: Asian alone, Asian in combination, and Asian alone-or-in-combination. Individuals who identified only one detailed Asian group, such as Korean or Vietnamese, or more than one detailed Asian group, such as “Korean and Vietnamese” are characterized as the Asian alone population. However, respondents who reported one detailed Asian group along with another racial group, such as Asian and White, are referred to the Asian in combination population. The Asian alone-or-in-combination category is the combination of both the Asian alone population and Asian in combination (Hoeffel, Rastogi, Kim, & Shahid, 2012, p. 3).

Table 2

Changes in Asian Population between 2000-2010 Measuring Asian Alone					
Asian	2000	2010	Changes		
			Number	Percentage	
Asian Alone	10,242,998	14,674,252	4,431,254	43.3	
Chinese	2,432,585	3,347,229	914,644	37.5	
Filipino	1,850,314	2,555,923	705,609	38.1	
Asian Indian	1,678,765	2,843,391	1,164,626	69.3	
Vietnamese	1,122,528	1,548,449	425,921	37.9	
Korean	1,076,872	1,423,784	346,912	32.2	
Japanese	796,700	763,325	-33,375	-4.1	

U.S. Census “The Asian Population 2010 Census Briefs”

Table 2 documents the growth of the five largest Asian alone populations for the years between 2000-2010. Of the total U.S. population in 2010, 14.7 million, or 4.8 percent, people were identified as Asian alone. Thus, the Asian alone population experienced a 43.3 percentage increase in its total population since 2000. By far, the Chinese population is the fastest growing, followed by Filipino, Asian Indian, Vietnamese, and Korean. Of the 14,674,252 Asian alone population in 2010, the single detailed Vietnamese group accounted for 1,548,449. The decennial census reported growth from 1,122,528 to 1,548,449—a net gain of 425,921, or 37.9 percent, in the Vietnamese population between the period of 2000 and 2010. By region, the West has the highest concentration of Vietnamese, followed by the South, Northeast, and Midwest in 2010. In California alone, the Vietnamese population is estimated at 581,946. Other states with high concentrations of Vietnamese include Texas (210,913), Washington (66,575),

Florida (58,470), Virginia (53,529), Georgia (45,263), Massachusetts (42,915), Pennsylvania (39,008), New York (28,764), and Louisiana (28,352). Within California, four of the five counties with the highest number of Vietnamese are: Orange County, California (183,766), Santa Clara County, California (125,695), Los Angeles, California (87,468), and San Diego County, California (44,202). In Orange County, the cities most densely populated by Vietnamese are Garden Grove and Westminster, with 47,331 and 36,058 people respectively. With a rapidly increasing Vietnamese population, one can assume that the vitality of the Vietnamese language is strong, given the large enclaves of Vietnamese concentrated in specific regions in the U.S, particularly in California where more than half of the total population reside.

Despite governmental efforts at residential dispersion, the Vietnamese population began forming ethnic enclaves, a noticeable trend that was apparent as early as 1978 when “27 percent of all Vietnamese refugees in the United States lived in California alone and another 35 percent were concentrated in just nine other states” (Zhou & Bankston, 1998, p. 45). By the 1980s and 1990s, the highest concentration of Vietnamese were located in California, Texas, Virginia, Washington, Louisiana, Florida, Pennsylvania, New York, Massachusetts, and Illinois. Not surprisingly, many of these same states are still considered home to a large concentration of Vietnamese today. The concentration of Vietnamese in these ten states could be attributed to secondary internal migration and subsequent international migration (Zhou & Bankston, 1998). A survey conducted in the 1980s reveals that many Vietnamese in California were secondary migrants who came from another state. Their secondary migration westward was attributed to climate, job opportunities, and established social networks. Migration

patterns during mid 1980s and early 1990s show a flight out of the Midwest to northeastern and southern states. Northeastern states witness the migration of the Vietnamese to southern states, and the western states gained from all regions so that by the 1990s, almost half of the Vietnamese lived in California.

Growth in the Number of Speakers of a Language Other Than English

With a growing U.S. population in recent decades, particularly within the Asian population, the number of people speaking a language other than English has, correspondingly, experienced rapid growth. An explanation for this phenomenon is partly due to the rate of immigration. As newly arrived immigrants enter the country, the number of speakers of a particular language concomitantly increases. As of 2011, reports of language use by the US Census Bureau reported that 60.6 million people ages 5 years and over spoke a language other than English at home.

Table 3

Characteristic	Population 5 years and over (number)	Spoke a language other than English at home (percent)	English-Speaking Ability (Percent)			
			Spoke English “very well”	Spoke English “well”	Spoke English “not well”	Spoke English “not at all”
Population 5 years and over	291,524,091	X	X	X	X	X
Spoke a language other than English at home	60,577,020	100.0	58.2	19.4	15.4	7.0
Chinese	2,882,497	4.8	44.3	26.1	19.9	9.7
Japanese	436,110	0.7	57.5	27.4	13.9	1.2

Korean	1,141,277	1.9	44.5	27.0	13.9	1.2
Mon-Khmer, Cambodian	212,505	0.4	47.1	23.4	22.9	6.6
Hmong	211,227	0.3	56.7	22.2	14.9	6.2
Thai	163,251	0.3	43.4	34.8	18.9	2.8
Laotian	140,866	0.2	50.9	22.1	22.7	4.3
Vietnamese	1,419,539	2.3	39.8	27.1	25.8	7.3
Other Asian languages	855,303	1.4	69.3	19.6	8.4	2.7
Tagalog	1,594,539	2.6	67.2	25.6	6.7	0.5
Other Pacific Island languages	428,476	0.7	61.6	25.7	11.7	1.1

U.S. Census

Table 3 provides a summary of the number of people ages 5 years and older who spoke an Asian or Pacific Island language. Of the eleven groups, the Chinese, Tagalog, Vietnamese, and Korean languages are the most widely spoken, with the number of speakers exceeding 1 million. According to the *Languages Use in the United States: 2011* report, the Vietnamese experienced the greatest percentage increase since the 1980. As Table 3 indicates, of the 1,419,539 Vietnamese people ages 5 years and over, 2.3 percent of the population spoke Vietnamese in the home. Since the 1980 census, the number of people who reported speaking Vietnamese increased from 197,588 in 1980 to 1,381,488 in 2010, an increase of 599 percent (Ryan, 2013, p. 5). The increase in the number of Vietnamese speakers must be understood with reference to historical trends and population density. As described in the previous section, the influx of Vietnamese immigration to the U.S. began in the 1970s and continued its upward trend in the 1990s.

Historically, Vietnamese immigrants arrived in waves, the first of which began immediately following the fall of Saigon. As newly arrived immigrants, they accounted for a relative small portion of the total US population. Not surprisingly, the number of Vietnamese speakers documented by the U.S. Census reflects their relatively small numbers. With each successive wave of Vietnamese immigrants entering the US, which continued throughout the decades of the 1980s and 1990s, the total number of Vietnamese speakers increased. In addition to immigration, birth rates contributed to the total number of persons speaking Vietnamese. Although the number of reported Vietnamese speaking the heritage language has increased since the 1980s, suggesting that language vitality remains relatively high, the U.S. Census did not document levels of language proficiency. Unlike the self-assessment scale that asked speakers to rate their English language abilities in terms of “very well,” “well,” “not well,” or “not at all,” no similar measures seem to have been implemented to self-assess the speakers’ proficiency.

In addition to measuring the number of people who spoke a language other than English in the home, table 3 measured the level of participants’ English language ability through a self-assessment survey. On the survey, participants were asked to assess their English ability based on four criteria: “very well,” “well,” “not well,” and “not at all.” According to the report, 39.8 percent of the Vietnamese population reported that they spoke English “very well,” whereas 27.1 percent spoke English “well,” 25.8 percent did “not [speak English] well,” and 7.3 percent did “not [speak English] at all.” In sum, Table 3 indicates that more than half, or 66.9 percent, of the Vietnamese population spoke English “very well” or “well,” compared to 33.1 percent of the population that do not speak the language well or at all. One can conceivably argue that in large ethnic

enclaves where speakers are more likely to use their heritage language at home, in the community, and in businesses, chances of lower English language proficiency are greater; however, in California, which is home to the largest Vietnamese speaking population, “the percentage of Vietnamese speakers who speak English “very well” or “well” almost identically matches the U.S. average of 67.61” (“Becoming An American,” 2008). In addition, Texas, home to the second largest concentration of Vietnamese speakers, English language proficiency levels were 2 percent higher than the national average (“Becoming An American,” 2008).

Nonetheless, when compared to other Asian groups with 1 million or more speakers, the Vietnamese scored the lowest in English speaking ability. Table 4 documents the different English speaking abilities among speakers of Chinese, Korean, Filipino, and Vietnamese heritages.

Table 4

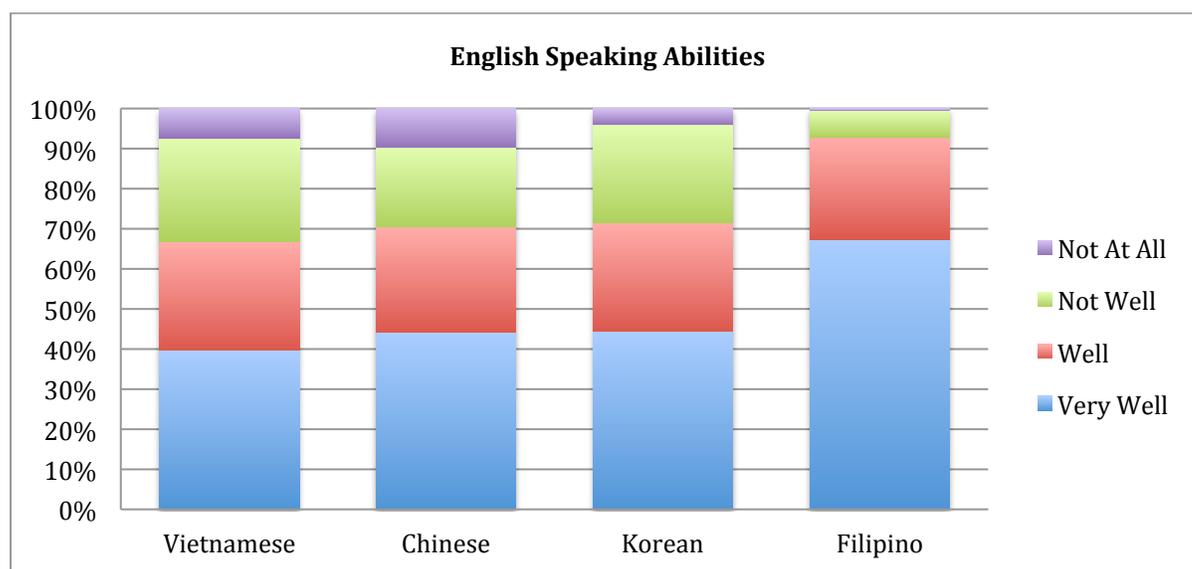


Table 4 shows a cross comparison of the four major Asian groups, characterized by the language spoken at home, with 1 million or more speakers who spoke English “very well,” “well,” “not well,” or “not at all.” As table 4 indicates, speakers of Tagalog were, by far, the most proficient in English, with 67.2 percent of the population stating that they spoke English “very well,” compared to 44.3 percent of the Chinese population, 44.5 percent of the Korean population. Overall, the Vietnamese population scored the lowest in this category, with only 39.8 percent of the population stated that they knew English “very well.” Conversely, Asian groups who self-identified as being very proficient in English had a smaller percentage of members in their population who do not speak English well or at all. For instance, speakers of Tagalog reported only 0.5 percent of the population who did not speak English at all, compared to 9.7 percent of the Chinese, 1.2 percent of the Korean, and 7.3 percent of the Vietnamese populations.

Although the U.S. Census report shows considerable growth in the number of people speaking a language other than English, particularly among the Vietnamese, research, in fact, shows that in the United States, speakers of non-English languages are quickly losing their ability to speak their heritage language. Concerns about minority languages, especially in linguistic context zones where English is the majority language, have led scholars to examine heritage languages as an area of inquiry. Since its inception in Canada, the term heritage language has been exported globally, bringing with it the inherent complications in defining the term in different social and cultural contexts.

Defining Heritage Languages and Heritage Language Speakers.

Since the 1990s, the terms *heritage language* and *heritage language speaker* have gained widespread currency in academic institutions in the United States, and while these

labels have circulated widely within the heritage language literature, defining them have been complicated by the multiple perspectives and purposes for which these labels have been used. In the heritage language literature, the elasticity of the labels has been commonly understood from three distinct perspectives: socio-historical, linguistic, and pedagogical. From a socio-historical perspective, the heritage language label commonly refers to languages that have a particular family relevance to the speaker, which includes languages from indigenous, colonial, and immigrant groups (Fishman, 2001; Cummins, 2005; Wiley, 2005; Peyton, Ranard, & McGinnis, 2001). In North America, indigenous languages refer to languages of Native Americans (i.e. Navajo), while colonial languages represent the languages of earlier European settlers (i.e. German, Dutch), and immigrant languages are spoken by newly arrived immigrants (i.e. Chinese, Japanese, Arabic). In accordance with Fishman, Deusen-Scholl (2003) describes heritage speakers as “a heterogeneous group ranging from fluent native speakers to non-speakers who may be generations removed, but who may feel culturally connected to a language” (p. 221). This broad, socio-historical perspective of heritage languages and their speakers includes those who have an affective or cultural connection to their ancestral language but who may lack the linguistic proficiency (Polinsky & Kagan, 2007). By underscoring the cultural relevance of a language to its speakers in defining heritage language learners, scholars emphasize the importance of ancestral affiliation, rather than linguistic proficiency. This broad perspective is particularly sensitive to language revitalization efforts by groups who have ancestral ties to languages that are endangered of becoming extinct because of widespread linguistic discrimination. In the case of Native Americans in the U.S., political precedents have prohibited the use of languages other than English,

and, as a result, the heritage languages of many Native American communities have atrophied. For heritage language learners who lack the proficiency to self-identify as speakers of their ancestral languages, yet wish to reconnect with them, cultural affiliation with the heritage languages becomes symbolically important.

While scholars such as Fishman and Deussen-Scholl advocate for a broad, socio-historical perspective of heritage languages and their speakers, other scholars, however, consider a narrow, linguistic perspective in defining heritage languages and heritage language speakers. Such scholars regard actual language proficiency as a salient marker in defining such labels. In her oft cited definition, Valdez (2001) defines a heritage language learner as “a language student who is raised in a home where a non-English target language is spoken, who speaks or at least understands the language, and who is to some degree bilingual in that language and in English” (p. 38). This language-proficiency based definition identifies heritage language learners who have some level of proficiency in a non-English language but who, as a result of linguistic assimilation, have shifted to the majority language. While Valdez’s definition is not without its problems, it is still important because, unlike Fishman’s socio-historical perspective, the emphasis is on actual knowledge and use of the heritage language. Adopting Valdez’s definition, Benmamoun, Montrul, and Polinsky (2013) further elaborate upon this definition and identify heritage speakers as second generation, “asymmetrical bilinguals who learned language X –the ‘heritage language’ – as an L1 in childhood, but who, as adults, are dominant in a different language” (p. 260). Benmamoun, Montrul, and Polinsky offer a narrow definition that focuses on heritage language knowledge and use. Restrictive definitions place speakers’ proficiency and competence along a continuum, from highly

proficient to low proficiency.

This narrow conception accounts for the range of linguistic proficiency among heritage speakers by placing them along a continuum and measuring their distance from the baseline language, which is determined by the language heritage speakers were exposed to as children, and not the standard variety that is taught in school or used in the media (Polinsky & Kagan, 2007). On one end of the continuum, the lowest-proficiency speakers, those furthest from the baseline, are characterized as basilectal, whereas high proficiency speakers, those closest to the baseline, are defined as acrolect. A basilectal speaker is someone who grew up hearing a non-English language spoken in the home, with little or no exposure to the language beyond the household. Generally, basilectal speakers are not able to read or write in their home language. Acrolectal speakers, on the other hand, exhibit very little deviation, and thus high-level proficiency, from the baseline language. They show near native like competency. Polinsky and Kagan examine basilectal speakers and discover recurrent features with respect to phonology, morphology, and syntax. Campbell and Rosenthal (2000) identify seven general characteristics typifying heritage language speakers. Based on their observations and work, they posit that heritage students have acquired an extensive vocabulary, grammatical rules, and knowledge of their language's phonological system. Despite having knowledge of their heritage language, heritage speakers rarely have opportunities to improve their literacy skills, and as a result, they experience difficulties reading and writing in their language (p. 167-168). For this reason, scholars have attempted to define heritage languages and their speakers from a pedagogical perspective.

Both the broad, socio-historical and narrow, linguistic perspectives attempt to describe heritage languages and their speakers, but these perspectives offer little in terms of pedagogical practices that will promote heritage language learning among heritage speakers. In complicating current definitions of heritage language learners, Carreira (2004) argues that current definitions of heritage language learners merely describe rather than seek to explain the needs of heritage language learners in support of their language development. For this reason, she seeks explanatory adequacy, a concept that draws from Generative Linguistics. In Generative Linguistics, a distinction is made between descriptive and explanatory adequacy. A grammar achieves descriptive adequacy when it “correctly describes the linguistic competence of the native speaker” (p. 8). However, a grammar is said to have explanatory adequacy when “it is able to get at what underlies this competence—that is—, if it is able to explain the nature and essence of that competence” (p. 8). Carreira adopts the concept of explanatory adequacy to get at a pedagogically oriented definition of heritage language learners that “offers insight into the particular linguistic, cognitive, and affective needs of HLLs with regard to learning the HL” (p. 8). In this regard, a definition of heritage language learner not only describes the heterogeneity of the population but also, and most importantly, seeks to address learners’ needs related to identity, language, and family background. Carreira characterizes four different types of heritage language learners: learners in the HL community (HLL1), learners’ personal connection to the heritage language and culture (HLL2), proficiency-based learners (HLL3), and learners who lack the heritage language fluency but are connected to the heritage language community (HLL4). For each group of heritage language learner, Carreira articulates an assessment of their different needs.

While the needs of each group differ, they do share some fundamental traits. The heterogeneity of these groups share common “characteristics of having identity and linguistic needs that relate to their family background” due to a lack of heritage language exposure to the language (p. 21). To address these needs from a pedagogical perspective, it is necessary that courses are redesigned with the heritage learner in mind, include instructional material that reaffirm learners’ ethnolinguistic identity, reflect their family background, and focused on heritage language learners (Carreira, 2004). The pedagogical importance of fostering and reaffirming heritage language learners’ ethnolinguistic identity and family background is especially important in reversing language shift.

Language Shift

Studies of heritage languages and heritage language speakers often point to the socio-cultural conditions that result in language maintenance or language loss. In studying language loss, scholars frequently refer to language shift. As Fishman (1964) explains, language shift is the process whereby “two linguistically distinguishable populations are in contact and that there are demonstrable consequences of this contact with respect to habitual language use” (p. 33). Young and Tran (1999) define language shift as “the lessening of the number of speakers of a language, a decreasing saturation of speakers in the population, a loss in language proficiency, or a decreasing use of that language in different domains” (p. 77-78). That is, when two or more languages, differing in social or cultural capital, come into contact, the language of the dominant group often replaces the “habitual language use” of language minorities. The shift towards the dominant language results in decreasing numbers of user of a particular

language and occurs in a relatively short period—as early as the third generation. To understand the process whereby language shift occurs, Fishman proposes a three-generational model that explains this phenomenon. In this model, first generation immigrants maintain and use the heritage language at home, while effort is made to learn English. By the second generation, however, signs of language shift are apparent, with speakers speaking an unaccented form of the dominant language and using the heritage language in limited social contexts. By the third generation, language shift to the dominant language is complete, and the heritage language is lost. As the three-generational model suggests, heritage languages become increasingly difficult to maintain because of long-term residency, which places language minorities in linguistic contact with the dominant language, where minority languages are not spoken by members of the dominant community. Thus, in the context of the U.S., a shift to the dominant language is most likely to occur as successive generations of immigrant groups assimilate to mainstream society and culture, and one of the chief consequences of assimilation is the displacement of the heritage language.

For many language minorities, the length of residency is detrimental to heritage language maintenance. Examining the language characteristics of Hispanic immigrants in the U.S., Veltman (1988) analyzes the correlation between long-term U.S. residency and the “observed patterns of language shift” (p. 545). The impact of this shift is most apparent among young immigrant children who have resided in the U.S. for an extended period, as opposed to those who are older and are recent arrivals. For instance, immigrants arriving prior to 1970 show a marked shift in language use from Spanish to English, and data analysis indicates that “language shift process is more or less completed

within approximately fifteen years” (p. 550). The pattern of rapid anglicization is corroborated in a study conducted by Portes and Hao (1998). In their study, they examine the language characteristics of five thousand second-generation students in south Florida and southern California, and, notwithstanding popular claims that immigration threatens the linguistic hegemony of English in the U.S., they discovered among their participants a near universal appeal for using English and the concomitant loss of heritage language proficiency (p. 270). Portes and Hao hypothesized that the length of residence contributed to the language shift towards English monolingualism, and, not surprisingly, their findings indicate that “the longer the youth had resided in the country, the weaker her or his command of the parental language, regardless of nationality or individual traits” (p. 279). Still, when comparing the level of heritage language proficiency across different nationalities, Portes and Hao reveal significant differences among Asian groups.

Their study identifies an important trend among second-generation children of immigrant parents, particularly as it relates to the Asian American population. While second-generation Mexican American students displayed higher levels of foreign language proficiency and stronger allegiance and retention of Spanish, second-generation Asian Americans exhibited lower levels of language proficiency. Interestingly, however, among other Asian groups, such as Cambodians, Filipinos, and Laotians, the Vietnamese were associated with foreign language proficiency, “for whom the effect was also positive and significant” (Portes & Hao, 1998, p. 277). And relative to other Asian nationalities, Vietnamese students displayed higher retention rates of their parents’ home language. Although the Vietnamese students in Portes and Hao’s study were associated with higher foreign language proficiency and retention relative to other Asian

nationalities, the effects of language shift are, nonetheless, a reality for many Vietnamese Americans. Even in cities densely populated by Vietnamese, such as Westminster, California and Garden Grove, California, many Vietnamese speakers are shifting to the dominant language. Young and Tran (1999), for instance, examine the phenomenon of heritage language maintenance and loss among a population of Vietnamese heritage speakers in California. The results of their survey of 106 Vietnamese participants indicate a rapid language shift from Vietnamese to English. The shift is a result of participants' length of stay in the United States. Based on their findings, Young and Tran conclude that the longer the stay, the greater likelihood that heritage speakers will shift towards English (p. 80). Their study corroborates other research findings that suggest a marked shift in the language preference of many Vietnamese. In a cross comparative analysis of language use, the number of Vietnamese speakers compared to the number of Vietnamese immigrants are markedly different, which may evince linguistic assimilation. In the states of California, for instance, there were fewer number of speakers than there were immigrants, 407,120 and 418,249 respectively. In New York, there were 20,250 speakers as compared to 25,141 immigrants. Finally, in the state of Nevada, there were 4,902 immigrants and only 3,808 speakers. These numbers suggest that that language attrition, at least for these states, occurs despite population density.

More importantly, public perception and governmental mandates about languages other than English contributes to language shift. Despite the growing recognition for the need of fluent multilingual speakers in areas of national security and international trade and business, public opinion regarding language differences and varieties constructs them as foreign, and by extension, their speakers as aliens (Horner & Trimbur, 2002). In fact,

in the 1980s, then Senator S.I. Hayakawa of Hawaii proposed constitutional amendments to establish English as the official language of the United States (Tse, 2001). Many states have proposed similar amendments and effectively passed English-Only policies. In the field of education, English-Only policies have been enforced to eliminate bilingual education programs in public schools and introduce a one-year intensive English immersion program designed to accelerate non-English speaking students' English language acquisition. For instance, in 1998, California's Proposition 227 passed into law, effectively eliminating bilingual education. Part of the push for English-Only mandates at all levels of society in the U.S. stems from an irrational fear that children of non-English language backgrounds (NELB) are not acquiring English, but studies reported by Tse demonstrate that the opposite is true. NELB students are acquiring English and losing their heritage language (Tse, 2001). Also, as Wright (2007) argues, high stakes testing and imposed sanctions on failing schools drive English-Only policies and pushes out HL programs. To date, English-Only policies have not yet proven to be an effective means of improving students' English language proficiency.

English Only, Heritage Languages and Rhetoric and Composition:

Scholars in the field of rhetoric and composition have recently taken up the issue of English-Only policy as it relates to the composition classroom. For instance, Horner and Trimbur (2002) trace the historic trend towards a implicit policy of unidirectional English monolingualism in the composition course that makes writing instruction in languages other than English inconceivable. They argue that the move away from classical education, which emphasized the teaching of Latin and Greek, towards the teaching of the modern language had a territorializing impact that not only influence

writing policy and practice but also assumptions about language. The assumptions about language at the turn of the late 19th and early 20th century parallel assumptions about language in English Only policy, which continue to inform our current writing pedagogy and curriculum (Horner & Trimbur, 2002). As Horner and Trimbur posit, “support for English-Only has been fueled by xenophobia” (p. 608). The fear is founded on the belief that immigrants pose a national threat to U.S social, cultural, economic, and environmental security. The xenophobia that fueled English-Only legislation extends to basic writers and open-admission students who are positioned as foreigners by those who oppose their admission to higher education.

Because heritage speakers often enter composition classrooms with more than one language and language variety, rhetoric and composition scholars have been critical of standard language ideology underlying English Only policy that seem tacit in composition courses. Elaine Richardson (2010) is especially critical of standard language ideologies of English Only. She sees that “standard language ideologies underlying English Only run counter to the spiritual of cultural, linguistics, and human diversity and reveal a preference for a certain type of “naturalization” of immigrants and an ideal type of assimilated African American and other ‘minority’ American group” (p. 97). The privileging of the standard English variety implicit in composition courses contributes to its misrecognition as inherently superior to all other varieties (i.e. Spanglish; Konglish). As a corollary, speakers of the standard variety are often valorized as possessing greater intellectual and moral worth, while others whose language varieties deviate from the standard are perceived as progenitors of moral and intellectual decay (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004). For rhetoric and composition scholars, promoting the use of heritage

speakers' language varieties challenges the standard variety of English in composition courses as inherently superior. To better understand heritage speakers, and promote their language practices, it is important to understand the identities they construct relative to the language and language variety that they use in different social context.

In an increasingly multilingual context of the composition classroom, rhetoric and composition scholars are paying greater attention to the ways in which speakers of languages other than English use language to index multiple identities across different social contexts. Examining Spanglish speakers in the border town of El Paso, Mangelsdorf (2010), for instance, explains how her students' use of Spanglish serves as a linguistic conduit for expressing "solidarity with other Spanglish speakers. It's an insider's language, a way to determine the background and interests of others, to speak of matters close to them, to claim cultural identity" (p. 119). For millions of heritage language speakers, these language varieties, borne from highly asymmetrical linguistic contact zones, represent hybridized cultural and linguistic identities that are constantly negotiated with respect to the different languages that speakers use, in and outside the composition classroom. (p. 116; Martinez & Young, 2011). Understanding heritage learners, their language varieties, and the identities they construct, helps inform our pedagogical practices inside the classroom by helping us rethink and redesign classroom practices that not only encourage but also reaffirm their language varieties and identities.

In response to a growing recognition of multilingual students, rhetoric and composition scholars have expanded the scope of their discussion of linguistic diversity to include languages spoken by refugees, immigrants, permanent residents, naturalized, and native-born citizens—who grew up speaking a language other than English at home

with varying degrees of proficiency. Thus, with increasing numbers of heritage speakers, teacher-scholars are charged with the responsibility of rethinking their pedagogical practices to suit their needs. The pedagogical concerns of teaching heritage speakers in rhetoric and composition overlap with studies in heritage language that have long sought ways to address the theoretical and pedagogical challenges of teaching heritage language learners. As Wiley (2005) points out, recognition of different types of learners have led to separate programs and courses being developed to accommodate the needs of native, fluent, and heritage language speakers.

Theorizing Identities: A New Framework for Understanding Heritage Speakers

While scholars have examined how social, political, and language policies contribute to heritage speakers' language attrition, little research has focused on how daily communicative interaction contributes to language shift. For many heritage speakers who face linguistic discrimination in their daily interactions with others, the experience of language shift not only entails the loss of their heritage language but also the loss of an ethnic identity. In general, scholars in heritage languages have argued that fluency and proficiency in HL speakers' home language are essential in constructing an ethnic identity and positioning themselves as members of their ethnic community. However, such research does not fully capture the range of identities that heritage speakers construct and negotiate in their daily communicative interaction. In some cases, as research has shown, heritage speakers construct identities that are inconsistent with their ability to speak their home language.

Chiang and Schmida (2011), for instance, examines the tension between linguistic identity and linguistic ability among Non-English Language Background (NELB)

students of Asian heritage, and in their findings, they discovered that NELB students define themselves as bilinguals, although they are unable to fully speak their HL. In this regard, their self-identification as bilinguals “does not necessitate an ability to speak, read, and write in their heritage language, but rather a traditional cultural *affiliation* with the heritage language” (p. 99). The tension that Chiang and Schmida identify illustrates how HL speakers constantly negotiate multiple identities to legitimize their membership in their ethnic community when their self-identification is not supported by any clear proficiency in their HL.

Issues of identity have been an important area of study, particularly by scholars in the field of SLA, who draw upon a poststructuralist framework to inform their research on identity construction. Whereas a social structuralist approach presupposes that “individuals are determined by their membership in social categories” (Block, 2014), a poststructuralist approach denies such an essentialist position by moving towards a “more nuanced, multileveled and ultimately, complicated framings of the world around us” (Block, 2014). In his work, Block (2014) argues that identities are socially constructed, emerging out of social interaction where speakers negotiate different positions.

[I]dentities [are] socially constructed, self-conscious, ongoing narratives that individuals perform, interpret and project in dress, bodily movements, actions and language. Identity work occurs in the company of others – either face-to-face or in an electronically mediated mode – with whom to varying degrees individuals share beliefs, motives, values, activities and practices. Identities are about negotiating new subject positions at the crossroads of the past, present and future. Individuals are shaped by their sociohistories but they also shape their

sociohistories as life goes on. The entire process is conflictive as opposed to harmonious and individuals often feel ambivalent. There are unequal power relations to deal with, around the different capitals – economic, cultural and social – that both facilitate and constrain interactions with others in the different communities of practice with which individuals engage in their lifetimes. (p. 32).

Block identifies key characteristics of a poststructuralist turn in the study of identity.

Unlike early studies of identity that relied on a structuralist perspective, which essentializes individuals based on social categories, such as race, class, and gender to understand and explain human behavior, a poststructuralist perspective challenges such essentializing conception of identity and instead calls for an understanding of identity as multiple and conflicting.

Similarly, Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004) argue for a poststructuralist perspective of the negotiation of identities that challenges intergroup socio-psychological approach (3). The intergroup socio-psychological approach has been criticized for its monolingual and monocultural bias. Because the approach is predicated upon a one-to-one correlation between language and identity, it “conceives of individuals as members of homogeneous, uniform, and bounded ethnolinguistic communities and obscures hybrid identities and complex linguistic repertoires of bi- and multilinguals living in a contemporary global world.” (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004, p. 5). For this reason, scholars have reexamined this simple correlation and have instead argued for an alternative framework that allows for more nuanced understanding of the negotiation of identities as “situated within larger socioeconomic, sociohistoric, and sociopolitical processes” that are more “context-sensitive [...] than approaches offered by social

psychology” (p. 3). Challenging the socio-psychological paradigm by situating the negotiation of identities within these larger socioeconomic and sociopolitical processes, Pavlenko and Blackledge purpose a framework that combines “social constructionist focus on discursive construction of identities and to the poststructuralist emphasis on the role of power relations” (p. 13). In particular, they draw upon poststructuralist theories Davies and Harré and Bourdieu.

Davies and Harré (1999) explore the concept of positioning to explain how identities are created by negotiating different subject positions. As Davies and Harré state, positioning is the “discursive process whereby selves are located in conversations as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced story lines.” (p. 37). That is, identities are not fixed across time and space, which is then made communicable to others through performances, dress, bodily movements, and language. Instead, the construction of an identity occurs in social interaction whereby “one [...] is constituted and reconstituted through the various discursive practices in which they participate” (p. 46). In social interaction, individuals construct their identities through reflexive and interactive positioning. This means that speakers are constantly negotiating who they are because, through reflexive positioning, they position themselves in relations to their interlocutors, whereas interactive positioning occurs when speakers are positioned by others.

Positioning theory helps explain how individuals position themselves and are positioned by others in social interaction. Reflexive and interactive positioning are especially important to consider when examining how individuals locate themselves in communities of practice. A community of practice is an “aggregate of people who come

together around mutual engagement in an endeavor” (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992, p. 464). In a community of practice, members have, overtime, developed ways of doing, thinking, talking, and acting—that is practices define a community (Wenger, 1998, p. 45). In their seminal work, Lave and Wenger (1991) reconceptualizes the notion of learning by conceiving it as legitimate peripheral participation in communities of practice. Legitimate peripheral participation, as Lave and Wenger state, “provides a way to speak about the relations between newcomers and old-timers, and about activities, identities, artifacts, and communities of knowledge and practice” (p. 29). In their view, learning occurs as individuals increase their participation in their communities of practice. Through legitimate peripheral access, individuals are able to observe how old-timers in their communities of practice interact, negotiate the meaning of social practices.

The notion of communities of practice serves as an important framework for understanding how identities are constructed. According to Lave and Wenger (1991), learning involves the “whole person; it implies not only a relation to specific activities, but a relation to social communities – it implies becoming a full participant, a member, a kind of person” (p. 53). In other words, as individuals with legitimate peripheral access continue to participate in their communities of practice, their identities evolve to reflect the changes in their learning and the different subject positions they take up within their communities of practice. Instead of identities being fixed across time and space, identities are “long-term, living relation between persons and their place and participation in communities of practice. Thus, identity, knowing, and social membership entail one another” (p. 53).

More recently, scholars have begun to interrogate the one-to-one correlation between language and ethnic identity in studies of heritage language and call instead for an understanding of HL identity as multilayered and negotiated. Drawing on Block, Pavlenko, and Blackledge, Potowski (2012) examines the multiple ways in which identity is constructed, looking, in particular, at how identity is constructed and negotiated through performativity, ambivalence, hybridity, and communities of practice. Potowski examines the notion of identities generally and with relations to bilingual Latinos in the United States specifically, and she concludes that the “development and maintenance of an HL and a core sense of identity is a kind of essentialization that runs the risk of homogenizing heritage speakers, who vary on this and a number of other primary identity constructs” (p. 193). For this reason, Potowski argues for further classroom-based research that challenges essentialists’ notions of identity.

Earlier work by Val and Vinogradova (2010) challenges essentialist notions of HL identity by asking us to consider “What is the Identity of a Heritage Language Speaker?” Such a question complicates earlier works in HL studies that relate HL proficiency with ethnic identity and calls attention to the discursive construction of identities. They posit that the identities of heritage speakers are constantly negotiated with respect to the social context in which speakers find themselves:

[T]he identity of heritage language speakers involves the process of constant negotiation and self-positioning within a multicultural/bicultural environment, where language fluency and choices indicate affiliation with and the level of connection to mainstream and heritage language groups. By positioning themselves as insiders or outsiders in relation to heritage and mainstream cultures,

heritage language speakers engage in the process of constant becoming and negotiation of their fluid and multilayered heritage language identities. This process demonstrates the complexities and challenges involved in subject positioning that influence language choices and expression of agency. It is the process of constant negotiation with the self and the other (p. 7).

In this regard, the personal language expressions reflect the fluidity of heritage speakers' identities. Efforts to reexamine the identities of HL speakers have been underway. In an ethnographic study examining the micro-linguistic practices of second-generation Korean-American students in a Korean language class, Jo (2001) challenges intergroup sociopsychological approaches that simplify the relationship between language and identity and argues that participants' personal language expressions reflect diverse social worlds in which they inhabit. Jo argues that students' language expressions deviate from standard Korean, which "reveal the process of deconstructing rules, crossing language boundaries, and mixing different codes" (p. 27). When compared to standard Korean expressions, students' language expressions demonstrate a marked difference that reflect their identities and lived experiences as Korean-Americans.

The influence of the poststructuralist approach to the study of identities is garnering greater attention in the field of HL. Wong and Xiao (2010), for instance, explore the ways in which Chinese HL students from different dialect backgrounds construct their identities. In their interview of 64 Chinese HL students, they employ a poststructuralist approach to examine how language investment, language hegemony, and imagined communities influence Chinese HL students' identity construction and their language learning experiences.

Current Research

In this research, I draw upon concepts from positioning theory and communities of practice to understand how heritage speakers negotiate different subject positions in their communicative interactions with members within and outside of their communities of practice. The current research examines how second generation Vietnamese heritage speakers who, despite having shifted to the dominant language, English, construct and negotiate multiple identities in order to position themselves as legitimate members of their ethnic community. In this regard, participants' language shift did not entail a loss of an ethnic identity. By examining the ways in which these Vietnamese heritage speakers redefine their ethnic Vietnamese identities, my research departs from the socio-psychological paradigm that establishes a one-to-one correlation between language and identity and calls, instead, for an understanding of identity as a series of negotiated identities in communicative interaction.

Participants:

In this study, I selected participants from the Southwestern states of Arizona and California. I used purposive sampling to recruit participants who are second generation Vietnamese Americans, have at least an elementary ability to read, write, speak, or understand Vietnamese, and are at least 18 years old. I use the designation second generation to denote U.S.-born adolescents with at least one foreign-born parent" (Kim & Chao, 2009, p. 30). In seeking out participants for this project, I contacted former students of Vietnamese ancestry and the president of the Vietnamese Student Association (VSA) at a large research institution. In recruiting, I did not contact participants with whom I had a personal relationship so as to avoid the "perils of easy access" (Seidman,

1998, p. 34). When contacting the president of VSA, I sent her an IRB approved recruitment flyer to be disseminated to the VSA listserv, and I arranged a time to introduce myself and present my research project to members of the association. After concluding my presentation, I disseminated recruitment fliers to those in attendance so that they can share my information with their friends and family members who met the stated criteria. This strategy, also known as snowballing sampling, yielded one enquiry from an interested member who served as a pilot participant in my study.

The short profile of each participant is provided in table 5. In this table, all names have been changed to protect the identities of the participants.

Profile of Second Generation Vietnamese Heritage Speakers

Name	Age	Gender	Place of Birth
Henry	25	Male	California
Kate	21	Female	California
Jane	18	Female	Arizona
Tiffany	19	Female	Arizona

At the time of the study, all participants were enrolled in college.

Data Collection Procedures:

The qualitative research project was designed using phenomenological interviewing procedures. Phenomenological interviewing consists of three 90 minute interviews that is taken place within 1-3 weeks to complete. The time in between each interview session gave the interviewer time to reflect upon the previous interview and construct more open-end questions for the following interviews. The first of the three interviews in phenomenological interviewing is to focus of participants' life histories. In

answer to the research question, participants are asked to contextualize their lives by reconstructing their experiences from their earliest memory to the present time. In this stage of the interview process, the interviewer is seeking information only. Thus, participants are not only asked “why” but “how” in response to the open-ended research question. For instance, my research question asks participants to describe how their Vietnamese language use impacted how they see themselves and their social relations with members of their Vietnamese communities. After conducting the first interview, I analyzed the data and created open-ended questions from themes that emerged.

In the second interview, participants are asked to provide a detail account of their present lives with respect to the research questions posed. That is, they described how their Vietnamese language proficiency impacts how they currently perceive themselves and their relationships with other Vietnamese. Participants explore how, for example, their language proficiency shapes their understanding of themselves as Vietnamese Americans. In the third and final interview, participants reflect upon their statements made in interview one and two. In this way, the third interview helps participants make meaning of their past to understand their present situation. For students in Arizona, all interviews were conducted on campus in a room provided by the supervising researcher. For the participant in California, all three interviews were conducted at his place of residence. After the interviews, I followed up with two participants to clarify their answers. Correspondence was conducted through email.

Data Analysis:

The interviews were tape-recorded, transcribed, and coded using MAXQDA 11 software. After the interviews were transcribed, they were then coded for topics, themes, and categories. As themes begin to emerge, a chart was created to cross compare the data and group them together into broader conceptual categories.

Outline of Chapters:

An area of research that has gained considerable attention in the heritage language literature is that of language and identity. Researchers argue that language serves as the underlying marker of ethnic identity, but little attention is paid to the ways in which heritage speakers' language use and identity are structured by power relations. Drawing on works from Norton (1995, 2000), Norton and Toohey, and Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004), I argue, in chapter 2, that an understanding of heritage language learners' identities must be understood relative to the socio-cultural context in which their language learning and use occurs.

In chapter 3, I examine the current literature that relates language proficiency, identity and inter-group communication in heritage language studies. Researchers have sought to understand how language proficiency either constrains or facilitates social interaction. Cho (2000), for instance, shows that the strength of heritage speakers' language proficiency facilitated participation and improved relationships with members of the targeted language group. Conversely, heritage speakers with lower levels of heritage language proficiency expressed feelings of inadequacy, rejection, and isolation and thus avoided social situations that required participation. I argue, however, that language proficiency alone does not adequately account for heritage speakers'

participation or non-participation with members of their language community. In order to understand how language and identity are important to speakers' participation in their target language group, we must focus not only on actual engagement but also examine speakers' imagined communities. Norton (2001) notes that the creation of an imagined community invites an imagine identity. For heritage speakers, their imagined community is a community of fluent speakers. Thus, by examining the imagined community of heritage speakers, and the identities they construct of themselves, we are better able to see how their investment in the heritage language impact their level of participation within their targeted language community.

Chapter 4 focuses on participants' role as language brokers, which define an important aspect of their socialization process with limited or non-English speaking members of their ethnic community. Language brokering is the process whereby "a third party provides communication among different language and/or cultural agents" (McQuillan & Tse, 195). While research on this phenomenon does exist, researchers have acknowledged that it has rarely been studied and remains under theorized (Morales & Hanson, 2005). The bulk of existing research on language brokering focuses primarily on Latino children, "and only a few studies have included Vietnamese and Chinese children, thus severely limiting the applicability of the findings to the larger immigrant population in the United States" (Morales & Hanson 491). Therefore, to contribute to the paucity of research on this phenomenon on other ethnic communities, I examine individual perception of language brokering and its impact on parent-child relationship among second-generation Americans of Vietnamese ancestry. By researching this ethnic group, I not only seek to fill in gaps in the literature but also determine the applicability

of current research across other language minority groups.

In chapter 5, I consider the pedagogical implications of my research, and I argue that the field of rhetoric and composition must consider the identities and imagined communities of heritage speakers in order to meet the identity needs of this population of students.

CHAPTER 2

HERITAGE LANGUAGES, INVESTMENT, AND NEGOTIATED IDENTITIES

As of 2011, the US Census Bureau reported that 60.6 million Americans ages 5 and over spoke a language other than English at home. While such numbers suggest that heritage languages are maintained, the reality is that the heritage languages of minority groups in the US are quickly being replaced with English as children of immigrant parents rapidly assimilate to the language and culture of the dominant group. Linguistic assimilation has been a central issue for many scholars concerned about the loss and maintenance of heritage languages of language minorities. Fishman, for instance, proposes a model of language shift that explains heritage language loss among children of immigrant parents by the third generation. As a result of this trend, scholars in rhetoric and composition and heritage languages alike have recently responded to the threat that English poses on the languages, cultures, and identities of language minorities. Specifically, they have examined English Only policies. For instance, Tse (2001) examines the misconception that immigrants cling to their heritage languages and argues that this misconception has influenced English Only policies that seek to assimilate them linguistically. Likewise, US Native American scholar Richard Scott Lyons discusses the symbolic and physical imposition of English Only policies in the U.S. that has resulted in the loss of the heritage languages of indigenous peoples. Lyons seeks to preserve heritage languages against “settler languages like English or Spanish, not because they are ‘authentic’ in some essentialist manner but because they are threatened” and because “they do carry cultural knowledge and ways of being—a certain habitus, if you will—that are threatened right along with them” (p. 139). Michelle Hall Kells

echoes Lyons' sentiments and argues that “[o]ur historical languages [...] represent cultural maps, social lifelines to the ancients—language guides to ways of knowing and ways of being” (p. 210), but these historical languages are quickly disappearing as a result of the assimilating force of English.

While these macro-level analysis of socioeconomic and sociopolitical processes illuminate the impact of language shift among HL speakers, few scholars have examined how, in micro-level communicative interactions, inequitable social relations and linguistic discrimination by targeted language speakers contribute to HL speakers' language shyness and loss. Despite a shift to the dominant language, and the concomitant loss of their HL, these speakers invested in learning their HL because it intersected with the multiple identities that they construct and negotiate as sons, daughters, and caregivers. The multiple identities that participants negotiate fulfill a specific need, whether it is to connect with their culture or act as a caregiver, that necessitates the use and learning of their HL. In this chapter, I begin by examining sociopsychological approaches to language and identity. Afterwards, I frame the argument using Norton's (1995, 2013) concept of investment to argue that HL speakers' investment in their language learning intersects with their multiple identities.

Sociopsychological Approaches to Language and Identity

According to Blackledge and Pavlenko (2001; 2004), the sociopsychological paradigm consists of a number of intergroup theories, which draws from Tajfel's model of social identity that sees identities as determined by group membership. The paradigm presupposes a one-to-one correlation that relates language with ethnic identity that continues to inform the research agenda of many heritage language scholars who hold

that language largely determines ethnic identity, and the findings from their research consistently confirm this correlation (Oh & Fuligini, 2010; Lee, 2013; Kim & Chao, 2009; Kang & Kim, 2012; You, 2005).

In their work surveying adolescents and parents of 81 Armenians, 47 Vietnamese, and 88 Mexican families, Phinney, Romero, Nava, and Huang (2001) propose a model that relates language proficiency, parental cultural maintenance, and in-group participation as predictors for the development of an ethnic identity. The results show that Armenian and Mexican adolescents interacted with their peers and maintained ethnic language proficiency significantly more often than Vietnamese adolescents. However, cultural maintenance and ethnic identity were similar across all groups (p. 145). Despite the differences, noticeable patterns common among adolescents across all 3 groups were documented. Phinney, Romero, Nava, and Huang, for instance, demonstrate that language proficiency had a positive impact on ethnic identity (p. 148). Their findings are consistent with other research studies that establish a one-to-one correlation between HL proficiency and ethnic identity (Cho, Cho, & Tse 1997). Similarly, Lee (2002) investigates the relationship between ethnic identity and heritage language maintenance among 40 second-generation Korean-Americans. Her questionnaires evaluate participants' cultural identity, and the results of her findings are measured against data of participants' perceived Korean language proficiency. The results show a positive relationship between participants' language proficiency and bicultural identity.

Whereas previous studies propose a direct correlation between language and ethnic identity development, few have yet theorized the different stages of ethnic identity development with respect to language learning. For this reason, Tse (2000) develops a

four-stage model that places language and identity along a continuum. The first stage of ethnic identity formation begins with unawareness. During this brief stage, which generally occurs during childhood, ethnic minorities are unaware of their minority status. Following this brief period of “unawareness,” they may experience a period of “ethnic evasion/ambivalence.” In this stage, ethnic minorities harbor negative perceptions of their culture and heritage, resulting in an outward denial of their cultural and/or racial background. Expressions of ethnic evasion and ambivalence take on various forms, some subtle and others more overt. In the most obvious case of ethnic evasion, ethnic minorities articulate their desires to look and be “more white” or may express wanting blue eyes or associating with whites only. Whereas ethnic evasion marks a period of aversion towards their culture, the third stage, ethnic emergence, is a period of ethnic minorities’ exploration of their heritage language and culture. This exploratory stage occurs when they realize that they are indeed part of a minority group. Having explored their culture, ethnic minorities may enter the final stage, which is “ethnic identity incorporation.” In this final stage, ethnic minorities find membership within their ethnic communities.

Employing her model of ethnic identity development, Tse (1999; 2000) examines the auto-biographical narratives of 39 Asian Americans during the stage of ethnic ambivalence/evasion and reveals that narrators who harbored negative attitudes towards their ethnic group and heritage language displayed weak language abilities, which they expressed little desire to maintain or develop. The negative feelings toward the heritage language reflect the need to distance themselves from their culture; conversely, their need to prove English fluency was a bid for acceptance by the dominant group (p. 195-197).

The socio-psychological import of Tse's study suggests that heritage language maintenance relies, in part, upon the social status of the language among peers and individuals' positive learning experiences. Although Tse seeks to complicate the oversimplified relationship established between language and identity, the stages in her theory is predicated upon an essentialized notion of ethnic identity "conceives of individuals as members of homogeneous, uniform, and bounded ethnolinguistic communities and obscures hybrid identities and complex linguistic repertoires of bi- and multilinguals living in a contemporary global world." (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004, p. 5). For this reason, scholars have employed a poststructuralist framework to understand identities as socially constructed and products of social interaction.

Theory of Language Learning, Investment and Identity

Employing a poststructuralist framework in her research on language learning and identities, Norton (1995; 2000; 2013) argues that Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theorists have yet to establish a coherent theory of social identity that relates the language learner and the language learning context, nor have they consider how power relations between language learners and targeted language speakers impact social interaction, which limits opportunities for learners to practice the language. The lack of a coherent theory of social identity results from the artificial distinctions that are made between the language learner and the social world. On the one hand, SLA theorists have focused on the individual language learner apart from the social context. They have characterized individual language learners as having a set of affective filters that either encourage or inhibit language acquisition. Also, learners are described by a host of other characteristics, such as introverted, extroverted and inhibited or uninhibited (Norton,

1995). On the other hand, SLA theorists have considered the social variables that impact language learning. They propose a theory that sees the social distance between the language learner and the targeted language speaker as the factor that determines interaction. The greater the social distance between the two groups, the less opportunities are available for second language learners to practice the targeted language. Norton problematizes this distinction and, instead, calls for an understanding of the “language learner as having a complex social identity that must be understood with reference to larger, and frequently inequitable social structures which are reproduced in day-to-day social interaction” (p. 13). For this reason, Norton draws upon poststructuralist notions of social identity as sites of negotiation and contestation and proposes a theory of social identity that conceptualizes the relationship between the language learner and the social world. Drawing upon the works of Weedon, a feminist poststructuralist, Norton examines the language learning process of immigrant ESL learners in Canada. Norton points out that psychological theories of motivation in the field of SLA conceive of motivation as a character trait of the individual language learner, so that learners who fail to acquire a language lack sufficient motivation to continue the learning process. In addition, theories of motivation have yet to account for the unequal power dynamics often at work between language learners and target language speakers. For this reason, Norton develops the construct of investment that combines SLA theories of motivation with the language practices of the classroom or community. She introduces the sociological construct of “investment” to bridge the connection between learners’ motivation and the language learning environment in which learners find themselves. According to Norton, “the conception of investment rather than motivation more

accurately signals the socially and historically constructed relationship of [language learners] to the target language and their sometimes ambivalent desire to learn and practice it” (Norton, 1995, p. 17). Although Norton refers to English language learners, her notion of investment captures the experiences of language discrimination faced by HL learners. Many HL learners often encounter a hostile learning environment where targeted language speakers criticized them for their mispronunciation and lack of proficiency in their HL to de-legitimatize their Vietnamese identity. These HL speakers faced criticism for not meeting what Wooldard and Schieffelin notes as the standards of their HL.

Language Ideology and De-legitimatized Identities

Standard language ideology, according to Lippi-Green (1994), is “a bias toward an abstracted, idealized, homogeneous spoken language which is imposed from above, and which takes as its model the written language. The most salient feature is the goal of suppression of variation of all kinds” (p. 166). Imposed from above, language ideology shapes social and cultural institutions by linking languages to “group and personal identity, to aesthetics, to morality, and to epistemology” (Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994, p. 56), and as this linkage suggests, standard language ideology exert a powerful influence on how people conceptualize their language and its users (Milroy, 2001). Jones (2011), for instance, recounts his experiences being discriminated because of his regional dialect. Raised in North Carolina, Jones spoke a dialect that others perceived as a deviation from Standard English. As a result, he made a concerted effort to erase his regional dialect and to achieve mastery in English grammar. Although Jones achieved academic success in mastering the codes of Standard English, the trade off was the lasting impact of language

ideology had on his self-perception. Like Jones, many other multilingual speakers experience a shift and understanding of their identities.

The impact of standard language ideology shapes how HL speakers view themselves and their HL proficiency. For instance, Kate was born in Placentia, California in 1992 and raised by her grandparents in Huntington Beach, California. She recalled not being able to interact with them regularly because the dynamics of their relationship was such that the grandparents spoke very little with her, and, in turn, she did not practice speaking, reading, or writing Vietnamese. The little interaction she did have with them was to request food or respond to questions that required her to answer either “yes” or “no.” Because the language practices of the home afforded Kate little opportunity to develop her Vietnamese, she was unable to articulate her thoughts fluently. Instead, she gestured and spoke single words to express her ideas. In order to communicate with them, especially with her grandmother who did not speak English, she waved her “arms around...[and] point at things.” She employed physical gestures to communicate because she recognized that her knowledge of Vietnamese was “[r]eally basic stuff, but it just wasn’t complete. Like they weren’t complete sentences. They weren’t complete thoughts. They were just like words shattered.” Because Kate perceived her Vietnamese proficiency as “basic” and “shattered,” she spoke very little or remained silent in the presence of more fluent Vietnamese speakers. For instance, at an outing, her family’s friends attempted to engage her in conversation, but because she did not know how to speak the language, she often responded with the only word she knew that would deflect attention away from her and limit her interaction with them. She would simply answer “yes.”

Like when we would...when we would go back to California...ummm...we'd go to Little Saigon and then...this is like when I was in high school, I was more aware of like people talking to me so then when people would talk to me, because they knew my grandpa or my mom or my dad and then I really wouldn't be able to reply. I'd just be like 'da' (yes). [S]o then, I'd feel really guilty about it, and then my grandpa or my mom or my dad would reply for me. So, it was kinda like...kinda like I was mute or something. Like I couldn't speak. They'd always had to speak for me or I just had to say it in like English with a Vietnamese accent.

The guilt and shame that Kate experienced were largely a reaction to those who sought to de-legitimatized her Vietnamese identity by evaluating her proficiency based on a standard language ideology. In this particular instance, targeted language speakers publicly denounce her because “she doesn't speak Vietnamese” and, thus, they perceive that she has lost the very link that connects her to her ethnic Vietnamese identity. Their public shaming was an effort to de-legitimatize the authenticity of Kate's Vietnamese identity and position her as an assimilated Vietnamese whom they regarded as “so American now” for shifting to the dominant language and losing the ability to speak the HL. To Kate, “it was pretty obvious that the comment, ‘she's so American now’ was negative. It wasn't like a positive comment. So, I took that...like in a bad way.” That is, she rightfully perceived the microaggressive comment negatively because it was designed to make her “feel really guilty” for not speaking her HL and losing her ethnic Vietnamese culture. Moreover, they would “have their like kid next to them or something and the kid can speak in Vietnamese.” The child's public display of his/her HL proficiency not

only reinforced the shame and guilty Kate felt but also whom they regard as legitimate speakers of the language speak Vietnamese in Kate's presence, they positioned her as an illegitimate speaker (Norton, 1995). In these instances, Kate remained reticent and at times "mute" because she was not invested in the discriminatory language practices of the community where inequitable relations of power defined the interaction between her and targeted language speakers (Norton, 2013). She was mute not because she could not speak but because the language learning contexts in which she found herself inhibited her from practicing the language by denying her the right to speak. In the discriminatory practices of her community, Kate was made to feel so ashamed and guilty about her language skills that she even questioned herself: "Oh. Wow. This is so...so...so bad. Like am I really that bad?" With reference to the intergroup sociopsychological models, Kate's expression of guilt may be indicative of her poor ethnolinguistic identity, since she was not proficient in her heritage language; however, such models have yet to account for the reasons why many heritage speakers, despite their inability to speak their native language proficiently, desire to maintain their languages and identify strongly with their ethnic identities.

A perceived standard accent that is free of regional variation is also used to discriminate and de-legitimize HL speakers' ethnic identities (Lippi-Green, 1997). Lippi-Green (1994) notes that the term accent "is used as a loosely defined reference to sets of distinctive differences over geographic or social space, most usually phonological and intonation features" (p. 164-165). Accent discrimination plays out in our social interaction with others. Henry, for instance, was discriminated for his inability to proficiently speak Vietnamese like targeted language speakers. When asked about his

experience speaking his HL among proficient Vietnamese speakers, Henry acknowledged that he was ridiculed for not pronouncing words like “how other natives [...] are saying.” Throughout his interview, he mentioned that the Vietnamese “in the community [...] would fix you [...] and laugh. “Hahaha...you’re an American kid. Your accent is really bad. But this is how you say it.” By openly ridiculing Henry for his accent, targeted language speakers were rejecting it and thus rejecting his identity. According to Lippi-Green, “when people reject an accent, they also reject the identity of the person speaking: his or her race, ethnic heritage, national origin, regional affiliation, or economic class” (p. 165). Accent discrimination becomes the basis for exclusion because it imposes a mythical, region free dialect.

Despite their ridicule, Henry insisted that he never took offense to it. He stated that he was unaffected by their comments so that he can reframe their accent discrimination as an opportunity for him to learn and improve his pronunciation. During the interview, he was quick to downplay their reaction by portraying it as a tease meant to merely point out that he spoke like an “American kid.” In fact, he portrayed them as beneficent, teaching him the proper ways of articulating Vietnamese words. However, in this instance, more proficient Vietnamese speakers positioned Henry as an American because of his non-native Vietnamese accent. The legitimacy of his identity is questioned when he dealt with customer at a job he held as a cashier at a crawfish restaurant.

[A] few years ago, I was working at a crawfish place, right? We would deliver crawfish and I...I don’t know how big you’re on crawfish but the Vietnamese community is really big on crawfish. So my two jobs was delivery boy or

working the front desk and taking orders for walk-in customers. And uhh...I remember a Vietnamese customer came in an older man and ...and I came in with Vietnamese like “hey, how are you doing? What do you need?” and he goes “you’re born here, huh?” I’m like “yeah, yeah I was born here.” I was like “why’d you ask?” He goes “you sound like my kids.”

Although Henry stated that he “took [their ridicule] in good humor,” these interactions signaled that they regarded him as an assimilated American who not only lost his ability to speak the language as a native but also cannot claim ownership to a Vietnamese identity. In the excerpt above, he began speaking Vietnamese with the customer as a way to position himself as a legitimate Vietnamese speaker. He addressed the customer by the appropriate honorifics to acknowledge the social hierarchy in Vietnamese tradition. Instead of responding to Henry’s question, the customer immediately picked up on his accent and asked him “you’re born here, huh?” The question was intended to solicit Henry’s confirmation so that he was able to position Henry as an American who “sound[s] like my kids.” Because he did not speak Vietnamese as a native, Henry was de-legitimized as a non-native Vietnamese. These interactions, wherein he was ridiculed and then corrected for his poor pronunciations, are “kinda the experience[s] of learning [...] Vietnamese, but you’re still being Anglicized because you’re born here.”

Although Henry claimed that he was unperturbed by being Anglicized, he was resentful of his aunt who criticized his Vietnamese pronunciation.

So...so...my aunt’s...I mean...she can be...be a cool person but then a lot of the times, she can just be that...donkey. I mean, ummm...she was just picking at me like ‘oh...you...you don’t say that. You say this. Oh, you don’t say this. You

say that. Or, no...no...no...this and this.' I'll look at her and go "your kid doesn't speak Vietnamese. Why...why you're bothering me so much about this. So that's when I got angry. I mean, my...my cousin, her son, lives with my grandmother. My grandmother calls me to go do errands for her at...at the house because my cousin can't speak Vietnamese. Like literally my cousin had to be—he had his girlfriend translate for me...to talk to my grandmother. And, yeah, I'm about two miles away from their house and my grandma keeps calling me to do stuff at the house. I'm like 'you know he's here. He can do it, too.' [to which his grandmother replied] 'Yeah, but he doesn't understand me.'

Henry was particularly agitated when recounting this particular interaction with his aunt. Unlike his previous encounters with others who corrected his Vietnamese, he was frustrated at his aunt for denying his Vietnamese identity. Henry's interaction with his aunt is significant because "it depicts clearly that a learner's identity is not only constituted by social interaction, but also constitutive of social interaction" (Norton, 1995, p. 136). In this brief interaction, his aunt sought to position Henry as an incompetent and illegitimate Vietnamese speaker, but because Henry was invested in his identity as his grandmother's caregiver, he angrily resisted his aunt's consistent criticism by pointing out that her son, Henry's cousin, can not speak Vietnamese at all and is thus unable to assist his grandmother with household responsibilities, despite the fact that he lives with her. In this interaction, Henry resisted his aunt's critical comments of his Vietnamese language skills by pointing out his aunt's hypocrisy.

While Kate and Henry were discriminated for being American, others were not considered American enough because they did not speak the Standard English dialect.

Likewise, Tiffany experienced racial and linguistic discrimination, the effects of which shaped how she understood race relations and negotiated her identity in different social contexts. Unlike Kate, Tiffany spoke Vietnamese for most of her childhood and had far less exposure to English. Besides learning English by watching television, she did not have formal English training and her speech was inflected by a Vietnamese accent that drew the attention of her targeted language speakers who often questioned why she spoke English with an accent. She recalled that her “English wasn’t so great cause I only spoke Vietnamese, so they’d be like “why can’t you speak English right? [S]o they would just tease me about that.” Tiffany’s experiences are consistent with findings from recent studies that examine native US English speakers’ perception of non-native speakers of English. Lindmann (2005), for instance, reveals that native US speakers consistently rated Asians poorly for the quality of their English pronunciation. Respondents from Lindmann’s study note that Asians “speakers from East Asia speak quickly and choppily, confuse /r/ and /l/, leave out words, enunciate poorly, and are hard to understand” (p. 208). Although Tiffany was born in the US, her native-ness was called into question because the manner in which she spoke English deviated from Standard English dialect. As a consequence, she was often characterized as “weird” or “different” for her stigmatized English pronunciation and became acutely aware of how her English language variety was used to alienate her from participating in social groups and functions. Tiffany not only encountered linguistic but also racial discrimination. An incident at school particularly highlights this problem. On the first day of school, Tiffany recalled arriving early in hopes to meet new friends, but what she encountered instead was racial discrimination.

I was really excited...cause I never been to school before, so I didn't know what to expect either, and my mom dropped me off. And I got into the classroom, and the teacher put like name tags on our desk. And I sat at my desk and then I was just sitting there like cause I was one of the first people in the classroom like everyone was like not there yet. And then a few minutes later...this guy comes up and he's like 'you're Chinese.' And I was like 'what? I'm not Chinese. Like I'm Vietnamese.' They're like, 'no, you're Chinese,' and then it was like 'are you sure?' ...I already felt so excluded because they're like 'you're Chinese like we don't wanna hang out with you. Like you're...you're Chinese.' And I was like 'what's wrong with that anyway, even if I was.' Ummm...but it like it hurt. I was like 'I thought it was normal. And then, I got to school. And then already like—they're like 'that's weird. Like you're weird.'

Schools operate as important spaces of socialization, and at the outset, Tiffany's English and race were marked as different and "weird." Because of her linguistic and racial differences, Tiffany felt excluded, so she sought to erase the identifying marker that made her different: her accent.

umm...when I realized that it was weird to be what I was, I didn't want to speak it [Vietnamese] as much. Like I just wanted da keep to myself and like learn as much English as I could. And that's what my parents scolded me for. And umm...I don't know...at school, I would just like try my hardest to like...not to have an accent. Try my hardest to... umm...I don't know be like everyone else you know.

Tiffany felt marginalized because she spoke English with an accent and her Asian heritage. She was often labeled “weird” and positioned as a foreigner, which caused her to harbor negative attitudes about her culture. Unlike Kate whose investment in the language was to reclaim her Vietnamese identity, Tiffany avoided speaking Vietnamese so as to prevent further harassment and discrimination by her peers. For instance, in social spaces, Tiffany deliberately refrained “from using it [Vietnamese] when I was like—when I would be on the phone with my mom, I would be like, “I’m gonna speak English...I don’t want to speak Vietnamese.” Because her English was inflected by a Vietnamese accent, Tiffany saw her knowledge of Vietnamese as a source of shame and embarrassment, which she attempted to remedy by trying “my hardest” to acquire a Standard English accent. Like Kate, Tiffany saw accents as a linguistic marker of culture, and because the language learning contexts was discriminatory, she sought to eliminate her Vietnamese accent and change the way she enunciated words in English so that she was indistinguishable from “everyone else.”

Investment, Heritage Language Learning, and Multiple Identities

Despite the discriminatory language learning environment these speakers found themselves in, they were nonetheless invested in bettering their HL proficiency because their HL intersects with the multiple identities they constructed and negotiated. That is, their investment in their HL is structured by their multiple identities as a son, daughter, caregiver, and among others. Although she was not a proficient Vietnamese speaker, Kate nonetheless identified with her Vietnamese identity, which served as the basis for her investment in maintaining her heritage language. Her investment in practicing Vietnamese was structured by her identity as a descendent of Vietnamese royalty. The

revelation of her family's history came to light on many occasions when her grandfather related stories of their family's royal lineage.

I think one time during Tet, we went to my great grandma's house.

And...ahhh...I realize...I found out that we were royal, and I was like, "oh my gosh. We're royal." Like how come...I come...I didn't know this?" so then I was like, "ok...I need to learn about my family more." So then he told me about it.

And, so, yeah...basically we were royal. That's why I like their last name is so weird. Not mine but theirs. And...umm...that's why it's so uncommon, which is like *Ton Nu* and *Ton That*. [Y]eah, so I was like, "these are really weird last names." But that finally explained it to me like why the last names are so weird.

So, because we were royal, I was like, "oh my gosh. Like I wanna learn more."

So, I asked my grandpa about it, and he said, "umm...yeah, we're royal."

The revelation that Kate is a descendent of Vietnamese royalty was a transformative experience that shaped her outlook on the language and culture, and it explained why her family members are important figures within their communities. When she discovered her family's history, Kate came to the realization that "this is like my family. This is my culture," and this realization served as an important catalyst for her investment to "really learn Vietnamese. That's when I bought the books from Little Saigon, and then I brought them back to Arizona and we [she and her mother] studied Vietnamese." Although her community in Arizona offered few opportunities to speak the language, she relied on books and her immediate family members for support, one of whom was her mother. Despite her impatience with Kate's slow progress in acquiring the language, Kate acknowledged that her mother was instrumental in encouraging and teaching her the

language. Because of her family's history, Kate found renewed interest in learning her HL because she desired to be a part of a culture in which her family was once instrumental in shaping. She desperately wanted to learn the language in order to identify with her family's royal lineage and be a good representation of her background. Not knowing the language, she felt that "I'm just a terrible representation" of her family, "so, that was another factor as to why I wanted to delve into more Vietnamese culture." Kate eagerly invested her time and energy in learning the language so that she could fulfill her desire to represent her family. She saw language as a strong indicator of ethnic identity and acceptance into the Vietnamese community.

Furthermore, her identity as a descendent of Vietnamese royalty helped her to resist linguistic discrimination and enabled her to speak for herself. Where she once remained "mute" in the presence of other Vietnamese speakers out of guilt and shame, she was now confident in practicing her Vietnamese in public spaces.

Now I order by myself in Vietnamese even though I still mess up. I don't get as embarrassed because I'm learning and trying. There's nothing bad about learning and trying. I see my older sister ordering in English even though she's better than me at speaking Vietnamese, and I don't know why. Now that I'm a young adult, I don't see myself as a dependent kid anymore, so I don't depend on my family to order/speak for me.

Although recognizing that she frequently made mistakes, she did not "get as embarrassed because I'm learning and trying." Kate's identity contributed positively to her confidence and independence, allowing her to reframe the relationship between her and targeted language speakers and see the discriminatory language contexts as opportunities

to practice Vietnamese. She refused to stay “mute” and practiced her HL, in spite of the linguistic discrimination and criticism she faced. In this regard, she no longer saw herself through “borrowed eyes” of other speakers (Tse 1999), but, instead, she positioned herself as a language learner who is “learning and trying.”

The family arrangement of a traditional Vietnamese household is unlike the nuclear family of western cultures. For many Vietnamese, the home includes not only the immediate family but also houses extended kinships across multiple generations. This experience of home offers unique child-rearing practices that emphasize the importance of filial obligation over personal interest and self-fulfillment. This experience was particularly true for Jane who was raised in a household where her grandmother played a prominent role in all matters of her life. At an early age, she was taught to read, write, and speak Vietnamese from her grandmother who was once a teacher in Vietnam.

My grandma lived with us so it was my grandma, my parents, and me. So home is always...you have to speak Vietnamese, Vietnamese, Vietnamese and nothing else. My grandma use to be a teacher in Vietnam, so she had this little composition book and every day she'd make me write with the accent marks in Vietnamese...and if I said something wrong in Vietnamese, she'd correct me and she'd make me, you know, make sure I understood why I was wrong. And then with like all the accent marks and, you know, the writing...I asked her “why do I have to learn this stuff?” And then she's like, “you're Vietnamese. Even if you were born in America, you're Vietnamese. You need to learn this stuff and keep it with you because in the long run, you're going to need it and you know your job, your career, so then, you know, it gives you an extra oomph...an extra

emphasis. So, with her, she was...cuz she was a teacher she was just, you know, really straight forward saying, “you have to learn it.” So there was like no choice.

This particular instance is telling of the ways in which Jane’s grandmother understood the role of language in the negotiation of multiple identities. In one sense, she saw language as a salient marker of identity, but what identity meant for her was not a stable construct. She negotiated multiple identities as a mother, grandmother, caregiver, and a teacher, and she taught Jane that maintaining her Vietnamese heritage language was important not only because “you’re Vietnamese” but also “you’re going to need it [for] your job...it gives you an extra oomph.” Her insistence that Jane learn the language for economic purposes reflected her understanding of the changing gender roles and identities in Vietnamese culture. Following the fall of Saigon, the socio-political changes that occurred during the era of mass Vietnamese immigration to the United States marked a crucial turning point in reconfiguring the power relationship between Vietnamese men and women. The traditional gendered hierarchies changed in response to social, cultural and economic pressures, which ultimately led to a shift in the balance of power as Vietnamese men and women negotiated the terms of their social and economic identities in the context of their new environment. What many Vietnamese immigrants experienced as a result of their forced resettlement to the United States, particularly for men, is the loss of their socio-economic status (Kibria, 1993; Matsuoka, 1990; Zhou, 2001). The loss of their professional occupation, which men intimately attach to their identity, challenged their social standing within the home and threatened their roles as providers. Having to survive in a completely new socio-economic

environment that made two incomes necessary, Vietnamese women worked hard to contribute to the financial stability of the home. This new role, uncommon to those whose lives have been confined to the home and circumscribed by patriarchal authority, shifted the control of social resources into the hands of women, which was a source of great anxiety and tension for men who have long enjoyed the privileges accompanying the control of capital.

Underlying this perception of loss were the largely unanticipated challenges to male power that had occurred with migration to the United States. There had been a shift in the gender balance of resources, one that had shrunk the differential gap between the level of men's and women's access to and control of key resources (p.109).

Yet, the forces of cultural change necessitated by a new environment that required immigrants to situate themselves in unfamiliar socio-economic positions of authority left an indelible mark on the behavioral patterns of both Vietnamese men and women and their perceptions of traditional gender roles. In spite of women's insistence to recreate the traditional Vietnamese family, the roles for men and women in the home inevitably changed, along with patterns of social behavior resulting from the influence of western mainstream culture (Kibria, 1993). As Kibria (1993) writes, "behavioral changes generated by phases in the migration process that call for a departure from traditional gender arrangements are unlikely simply to disappear when conditions of normalcy returned" (p. 142). That is, settlement to the United States, along with the new socio-economic demands placed on women, changed the relations between men and women. In this respect, Jane's grandmother may have understood these changes and the economic

opportunities available to Jane if she maintained her heritage language, which is especially important when interacting with other Vietnamese communities.

Jane's investment in maintaining her heritage language was structured by her multiple identities as a granddaughter, salesperson, friend and partner. In one instance, Jane described her experiences assisting her grandmother with her business.

...in the past, my grandma she use to do a lot of cooking, and she'd, you know, *ban do an* at home (sold food at home). So then people would call in and make orders. So then I'd always be answering the phone. And then they'll think that it's my mom when like I'm a 10 year old kid. And I would be like *da khong me khong co nha* (No, my mother is not home). *Sin hoi co ten gi* (may I please have your name). *Co can gi khong?* (Miss, do you need anything?). And then, you know, I use my Vietnamese on the phone. Or when my grandma would sell food at the church, I would stand there and help her sell. I was like "*co muoi dong*" (ten dollars, miss.) or "*co nam dong*" (five dollars, miss) and then "oh, con co bay dong". You know, so that way I kept my Vietnamese with like numbers you know saying "co," "chu," "bac" and all that.

Jane's filial obligations as a granddaughter intersected with her identity as a salesperson for the business that her grandmother operated from their home, and in order to successfully satisfy both roles, she was invested in maintaining the language because she would "always be answering the phone" and taking orders from customers. By assisting her grandmother with the business operations, Jane negotiated multiple identities simultaneously, identities that overlapped and intertwined. On the one hand, as the eldest sibling in the household at the time, Jane was bounded by tradition to assume the

responsibility of caring and assisting her grandmother as a display of respect and obligation to elders within the household, especially for extended family members who are advanced in age. Jane's filial obligations reflect a collectivist's approach that characterizes the traditional Vietnamese family household that emphasizes filial piety.

On the other hand, her identity as a dutiful granddaughter intersected with her grandmother's business, which required Jane to simultaneously position herself as a young salesperson. When customers called to place an order, they mistook Jane for her mother. Instead of assuming her mother's identity—which would have reconfigured the relationship between Jane and her interlocutors and altered her use of specific honorifics—she established clearly that she was, in fact, not her mother but instead her mother's 10 years old daughter. As Jane notes, customers called and “they'll think that it's my mom when like I'm a 10 year old kid. And I would be like *da khong, me khong co nha* (I'm sorry, my mother is not home).” Because Jane's investment in her language was structured by her obligations as a granddaughter and salesperson, she followed her statement with two questions that identified her as a person who is younger than her interlocutors. In her question, she asked: *Sin hoi co ten gi* (may I please have your name?). *Co can gi khong?* (Miss, do you need anything?). The honorific “*co*” is used not only as a marker of respect but also signified the age difference between her and her interlocutors. In other words, Jane used the honorific “*co*” to disconfirm that she was her mother but instead a young child who nonetheless was about to assume the responsibilities of assisting her grandmother in conducting her business. Jane negotiated these various roles comfortably, and the more she interacted with customers over the phone, the more practice she had speaking and developing her Vietnamese language

skills. In this regard, Jane's investment in her heritage language played a significant role in mediating between the multiple spaces she inhabited and identities she assumed.

Like Jane, Henry has served the important role of assisting the elderly of his household, and his investment in his HL has been motivated by his desire to provide them care. He has assisted his grandmother who has often relied on him to take her grocery shopping and for companionship. Since his grandfather's passing, Henry has noticed that "she doesn't get that much interaction with [the] family nowadays, so whatever I talk to her, she cherishes the conversations that we have." Seeing that his grandmother has spent much of her time alone, Henry has found it increasingly important that he interacts with her, and he has made a concerted effort to visit her regularly so that she feels cared for.

It [learning Vietnamese] was more a curiosity on my part because my grandma is getting older. My grandfather passed away and I decided to try and get closer to my grandma. Try to study just the family in general. I told my mom I want to learn to speak Vietnamese better and ahh...so I just made a conscious effort to try—try to speak Vietnamese more.

When talking with his grandmother, he would look after her and ensure that "her arthritis isn't bothering her too much." In addition to talking about her health, they would discuss different aspects of their lives. Henry would share with her his progress in school and ambitions in life, while she would talk about life in Vietnamese prior to the war.

Through his interactions with her, he became increasingly aware of the importance of maintaining the language so that he could provide aid to his ailing grandmother. He discussed how he was charged with the responsibility of chauffeuring his grandmother to her doctor's appointments, a responsibility he accepted without

resistance because he understood that others within his family perceived him as “that nephew or that grandson ‘who speaks Vietnamese who...who at least understands me better and he’ll talk to me.’” Thus, for Henry, his investment in maintaining Vietnamese must be understood with reference to his identity as his grandmother’s caregiver. As a caregiver, Henry served as the liaison that mediated between the Vietnamese speaking world that his grandmother inhabited and that of the dominant English-speaking world outside. She did not navigate the English-speaking world with ease, so she relied on him to translate English to Vietnamese. In this regard, Henry’s identity as a care provider provided the impetus for his heritage language maintenance. He believed that improving one’s language skills is especially important for “all of these people you care about. Like literally these people don’t speak that much English, they want you to speak Vietnamese, and they want to get closer to you.”

For these HL speakers, investment in their HL intersected with their multiple and overlapping identities as sons, daughters, business associates, and caregivers, and these identities were constructed and negotiated in social interaction with members of their Vietnamese communities. Because these HL speakers are multilingual, they often mixed and blended different languages and language varieties—a practice popularly known as code meshing.

A Linguistic Margarita: Code Meshing and the Negotiation of Multiple Identities

Invested in learning their heritage language, HL speakers mediate their interaction with other Vietnamese speakers by code meshing. Code meshing is different than code switching. Unlike code meshing, as Young (2009) notes, the traditional practice of code switching is the ability to “acquir[e] the facility to transition from one language variety to

a different one” (p. 50). This language practice presupposes that different languages and language varieties must be kept separate and used only within the context for which it is deemed appropriate. However, by keeping languages separate, code switching perpetuates a “segregationist, racist logic that contradicts our best efforts and hopes for our students” (p. 51). Keeping languages separate, as Young reveals, falsely perpetuates “the claim of linguistic equality,” while “replicat[ing] the same phony logic behind Jim Crow legislation” (p. 53). For these reasons, Young sees the “arguments used to support code switching are startlingly and undeniably similar to those that were used to support racial separation” (p. 53). Young evokes W.E.B Du Bois to explain how code switching is reminiscent of double consciousness (p. 51). He reveals how code switching forces multilingual speakers to develop linguistic double consciousness that creates two irreconcilable identities.

The experience of double consciousness is especially true for HL speakers who code switch to reflect their different spheres of belonging. Kate, for example, differentiates between her American and Vietnamese identities and uses English and Vietnamese in different sociocultural contexts. When describing the role of Vietnamese and English, Kate explains that she code switched from one language to another.

Because my sister is much less familial than I am, that may be why she chooses to speak more English. I think I really associate Vietnamese language with it being a collectivist culture and English with individualist principles. This extends into my identity as being Vietnamese (collectivist) and being American (individualist).
[...]
When I first started to become interested I was strictly collectivist with my

family and individualist outside of my family. Now I'm learning to blend the two in both of the cultures.

In this excerpt, Kate code switched from Vietnamese and English because she perceived that the different languages reflected her different cultural identities. For her, these languages were incompatible and therefore kept separated. At home, she spoke Vietnamese to demonstrate her collectivist identity, while, in public, she used English to articulate her individualistic, American identity. Kate's initial perception of her languages is consistent with the experiences of other Asian Americans who were raised in a multilingual environment. For instance, Lu (1987) recounts her early childhood experience learning two languages. In her narrative, she states that she "had identified the differences between home and the outside world by the different languages I used in each" (p. 438). Unlike Kate, however, Lu thought of English as her home language, while describing Standard Chinese, the language of New China, as the language of the outside world. Nonetheless, Kate's experience reflects what Young identifies as linguistic demarcation inherent in code switching that separates her multiple spheres of belonging. However, the reality is that languages change and intermingle over time (Horner, Lu, Royster, & Trimbur, 2011), and Kate's recognition that languages blend and intermingle resists "linguistic containment" that render "language differences invisible" (p. 82-85). Because of the inherent problems he sees in code switching, Young (2009) argues for code meshing, an alternative that "permits them to bring [their languages] more forcefully and strategically forward." (p. 62). Code meshing, thus, enables speakers to blend the various languages and "secures their right to represent that meshing in all forms and venues where they communicate" (p. 62). Code meshing,

thus, is conceived as a natural part of daily communicative interaction.

Code meshing, furthermore, offers HL speakers the opportunity to explore, negotiate, and reconcile multiple, and at times, conflicting identities (Young & Martinez, 2011, p. xxv). In her work, Martinez explores the struggles she experienced in reconciling the relationship between her HL proficiency and identity. Raised by parents who were themselves subjected to linguistic discrimination, Martinez was taught speaking English only, a language that conflicted with her self-asserted Chicana identity. By framing her experiences through the lens of mestiza consciousness, which, much like code meshing, calls for cultural and linguistic crossing, Martinez finds resolution to the conflict she experiences (Young & Martinez, 2011). Much like Martinez, HL speakers code mesh offers them a way of reconciling their multiple, socially constructed identities as Vietnamese American.

Code meshing enables HL speakers to negotiate their HL identities, and thereby deconstruct the “either/or” binary, and enables them to articulate their “multiple spheres of belonging” (Kells, 2011, p. 204). Code meshing English and Vietnamese, or what Jane appropriately coins “Vienglish,” is a necessity rather than an option. Recognizing the limitations of his ability to speak Vietnamese, Henry, for instance, code meshes both his HL and English.

It's a mixture of both. I mean the conversations sometime start in Vietnamese. midway through, get a little bit of English in and rest will be all Vietnamese. And umm...same thing mom or dad that's...that's how it really goes. One...one either dominates the one or the other. And they switch back and forth. I mean we do but then sometimes we want to articulate our ourselves in a higher manner and our

Vietnamese isn't...isn't not up to snuff. So we...sometimes we start in Vietnamese; we talk Vietnamese here and there, but then we just have to grow out of it because we can't express what we're trying...what we really want to say. Not only on the surface level, but like on a deeper setting because English has become our language.

In this instance, Henry code meshed rather than code switched. He is not, as Young identifies, using one language in a specific context, while suppressing the use of his HL. Instead, he meshed both languages in a way that acknowledges the "standard principles for communication, encourages [him] to fuse that standard with native speech habits, [and] to color [his speech] with what [he] bring[s] from home" (p. 64-65). In doing so, he does not succumb to what Young sees as linguistic double consciousness that forces speakers to relegate one language practice for another, but instead uses both to negotiate his complex, multilingual identities. Henry discusses code meshing as a natural part of his communicative practice with other Vietnamese.

Similarly, Jane code meshed in ways that suggest her private and public identities strongly influence each other. She recognized that identities are socially constructed by acknowledging that "there is no Vietnamese alone or Vietnamese-American or, you know, anything. I just feel, you know, I'm both, whether people like it or not. I'm Vietnamese and American because I was born here." The blending of her two cultural worlds, rather than having to choose either/or, is illustrated by how she meshes Vietnamese and English together. When discussing her experiences code meshing, she explained how "it wasn't a choice [to mix languages]. It was cuz I had no choice. Like I didn't know what to say, so I switched off with Vietnamese and English. And then like

now, like when I don't know, for a fact, I don't know how to say this...then I'll use English." Although her parents correct her by teaching her the equivalent Vietnamese words, she admittedly still code meshes. For HL speakers like Jane, Vienglish is an "in-between language that represents their own cultural and linguistic in-between-ness" (Mangelsdorf, 2011, p. 116). Her identity as both an American and Vietnamese is reified by the ways that she blended languages together that create what Mangelsdorf aptly states as her bicultural identity.

As the examples from these HL speakers illustrate, code meshing is not only vital in fulfilling their communicative purposes but also reconcile their multiple and shifting identities. Moreover, the practice of code meshing "has the potential to enlarge our national vocabulary, multiply the range of available rhetorical styles, expand our ability to understand linguistic difference and make us in the end multidialectal, as opposed to monodialectal" (pg. 65). For this reason, code meshing, rather than code switching, should become the linguistic norm.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that participants' investment in maintaining their heritage language was largely structured by their changing identities in different social contexts. By advancing this argument, I seek to challenge the sociopsychological paradigm that establishes a one-to-one correlation between language and identity. As the data from my study shows, the participants negotiated multiple identities across time and space, identities that were not only constituted by social interaction but also constitutive of social interaction (Norton, 1995, p. 136). In this regard, their identities were constructed, in part, by the ways in which native speakers positioned them as either

legitimate or illegitimate speakers along a proficient/non-proficient continuum. However, they did not succumb to the identities imposed on them. To resist the identities imposed on them as illegitimate speakers, the participants were active in reframing the relationships with others by seeing themselves as learners of the language. Their investment in their HL language learning was structured by their multiple and overlapping identities as sons, daughters, and caregivers. For this reason, being categorized as either Vietnamese or American fails to account for the multiple and often contradictory identities they inhabit. The identities they construct and negotiate is exemplified in the ways that the code meshed. Code meshing enables speakers to blend languages in ways that reflect their multiple spheres of belonging. For these HL speakers, investment their HL was not only structured by their multiple and negotiated identities but also motivated by their need to belong in their communities of practice as legitimate group members. Although a shared HL plays an important role in developing their sense of belonging, HL speakers relied upon their legitimate peripheral access and imagination to participate in the practices of their community in ways that, at times, transcends time and space.

CHAPTER 3
 “YOU’RE NOT VIETNAMESE”: PERIPHERAL ACCESS, LEARNING, AND
 EVOLVING IDENTITIES

They’re like “You’re not Vietnamese.” And I’m like “yes I am. I speak Vietnamese; I write Vietnamese; I eat Vietnamese food. You know, I do all this exactly like you guys.” And they’re like “no you don’t.” And I’m like, “you know, it’s so hurtful like just because I was born in [...] America, you’re going to discriminate that I am not Vietnamese.” So that ended. So I was like “fine. If you’re not going to interact with me, I’m not going to interact with you.” Jane 2014

Despite Jane’s ability to speak Vietnamese, she was denied access to the community of practice to which she sought membership. How, then, would Heritage Language (HL) scholars explain the interaction between Jane, a heritage speaker, and more proficient native Vietnamese speakers? This brief interaction presents conceptual problems for Heritage Language (HL) scholars who claim that the level of HL speakers’ language proficiency largely determines social interaction. In general, many HL scholars have documented how high levels of HL proficiency foster a greater degree of intercommunication and interaction among members of their ethnic communities, whereas the loss of speakers’ HL results in an increase in emotional distance and a corresponding decrease in interaction (Tseng and Fuligni, 2000; Mills, 2001). Krashen (2000) proposes the notion of “language shyness” to explain why many HL speakers withdraw from social interaction with members of their ethnic communities. He states that HL speakers remain silent to avoid criticism from more proficient speakers. For this reason, language “could also contribute to alienation from the HL group” (p. 41). In their

study of language development among Korean-American students in a heritage language program, Cho, Cho, and Tse (1997) conclude that HL speakers who demonstrated greater language proficiency in their HL participated and interacted more often with targeted language speakers than those who lacked HL proficiency. Their qualitative study reveals that participants in the language program were motivated to improve their Korean language abilities because they perceived that knowledge of the Korean language was integral to their active participation with members of their family and community. With reference to these studies, Jane should have been an active participant in the communities of practice in which she sought membership because she was proficient in the language and never experienced “language shyness.”

While these studies offer important insights into the ways in which language, identity, and participation intersect, they presuppose that HL proficiency determines HL speakers’ level of engagement in their communities. However, researchers have yet to engage speakers’ imagination as a mode of belonging. Thus, in this chapter, I argue that heritage language speakers envision multiple communities of which they imagine themselves a part. The imagined communities and identities they construct exert a powerful influence on their degree of participation in the communities of practice to which they desire to belong, and their investment in learning their HL. Findings from this research shows that when heritage speakers’ imagined identities are validated by members whom they regarded as legitimate old-timers in their imagined communities, speakers, correspondingly, participated more in the practices of their communities.

In this chapter, I begin by defining legitimate peripheral participation and participation and non-participation, as advanced by Lave and Wenger and Wenger

respectively. Next, I examine Norton's adaption of these concepts to SLA praxis. Then, I will examine participation and non-participation of four heritage speakers: Henry, Kate, Jane, and Tiffany. After examining their participation and non-participation in different communities of practice, I then examine their level of participation through the lens of their imagined communities and identities, and I argue that their level of participation in their communities of practice is best understood in the context of the imagined communities and identities they construct.

Language Proficiency and Participation in Group

Many studies in the HL literature have suggested that heritage speakers' HL proficiency largely determines the interaction with members of their ethnic community, but such studies unproblematically create artificial distinctions between HL speakers and the social world without consideration of how their sense of belonging and access to communities of practice impact their social relationships. For instance, in her oft-cited work, Fillmore (1991) points out that the loss in HL proficiency results in a corresponding loss in parent-child interaction. As Fillmore asserts, when intercommunication between parent and child decreases, it becomes increasingly difficult for parents to communicate beliefs and values (p. 343). Tse (2001) makes a similar assertion and claims that limited HL proficiency increases the likelihood of intergeneration conflict between non-English speaking parents and their English speaking HL children (p. 51-53). In her study of 114 Korean Americans, Cho (2001) shows that speakers' proficiency in their heritage language corresponded directly with higher levels of in-group identification and participation with members of their language community. Her study reveals that heritage speakers with more advanced heritage language

proficiency developed a greater awareness of ethnic identity, in part, because their language equipped them with a “greater understanding and knowledge of cultural values, ethics, and manners,” which in turn “further enhances their interactions with HL speakers”, whereas speakers who were far less proficient in their heritage language displayed lower levels of in-group identification and social interaction (p. 375). In general, many HL studies simplify the relationship between the HL speaker and the social world without consideration of the ways in which the relations of power between HL speakers and native speakers impact HL speakers’ access to their desired communities of practice.

Peripheral Participation as a Way of Learning

Lave and Wenger (1991) relate the learning process with participation in a community of practice. In their work, they develop the notion of *legitimate peripheral participation* to explain the process whereby newcomers, with peripheral access, engage in social practices, which serve as a way of learning. Wenger (1998) discusses the importance of participation and non-participation in shaping identities. He argues that “[w]e not only produce our identities through the practices we engage in, but we also define ourselves through practices we do not engage in. Our identities are constituted not only by what we are but also by what we are not” (p. 164). In this regard, identities are constituted by the combination of participation and non-participation. Non-participation is inevitable because we come into contact with other communities of practice to which we do not belong, but it takes on added significance when non-participation interacts with participation in ways that define each other, especially if the interaction either enables or limits participation.

To explain the interaction between participation and non-participation, Wenger distinguishes between *peripherality* and *marginality*. Peripherality requires some degree of non-participation to enable participation to occur. For instance, newcomers to a community of practice are often instructed on what to do, such as adopting certain types of activities. This non-participation serves as a form of learning and entry toward full participation. Whereas non-participation in peripherality enables participation, marginality is defined by a form of non-participation that restricts full participation. The experience of marginality is a lived reality for many women and people of color. The glass ceiling—a metaphorical barrier used to prevent women and minorities from advancing in corporate industries, regardless of their qualifications or achievements—is a form of non-participation that limits full participation to a community of practice. Because non-participation could either enhance or marginalize one's participation in a community of practice, it is important to understand how “non-participation becomes peripherality or marginality depends on relations of participation” (p. 167).

Identities are not only produced by participation and non-participation but also through the creative process of imagination. Individuals see themselves, the world in which they live, and their relationship with others across time and space through the act of imagination, which serves an important mode of belonging and group membership. As Wenger states, imagination is a creative process that “involves unconstrained assumptions of relatedness, it can create relations of identity anywhere, throughout history, and in unrestricted numbers” (p. 181). The creative process of imagination, thus, involves “expanding our self by transcending our time and space and creating new images of the world and ourselves” (p. 176). Although Wenger notes that imagination

differs from fantasy, it requires an element of it in order for us to recognize our experiences in others, establish affinities, reimagine new identities, and create alternative experiences and scenarios, which create a fraternity with others in an imagined community.

Examining the concept of imagination in his work on nationalism, Anderson (1991) conceives of the nation as an “imagined political community” because “the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (p. 6). Anderson points out that imagination requires individuals to see themselves as part of a shared network of common practices, ideas, and identities—a community “always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship” (p. 7). As Anderson posits, imagining the nation became possible when three distinct cultural conceptions lost their relevance, among them is the declining importance of a script language, which, for members of religious communities, not only identified group membership but also represented ontological truth (p. 13-36). As an illustration, Latin once exerted a powerful influence on the creation and maintenance of an imagined Christendom, and since relatively few people understood the language, aside from the bilingual intelligentsia who were thought of as mediators between earth and heaven (p. 15-16). However, by the sixteenth century, Latin’s influence experienced a precipitous decline because of the exponential growth of print-capitalism that marketed to readers of the vernacular language. In addition in the decline of Latin and rise of the vernacular, the erosion of dynastic control, with its centripetal and hierarchal social organization, paved the path for the rise of the nation. Finally, as Anderson argues, is the change in the concept of time.

Modern conception of time and simultaneity differ from in previous a “cosmology and history were indistinguishable, the origins of the world and of men essentially identical” (p. 36).

The decline of these cultural conceptions had set the stage for a new consciousness of nationhood. The roots of national consciousness emerged when capitalism and print technology converged and interacted in ways that changed the diversity of human language. As Anderson points out, “the convergence of capitalism and print technology on the fatal diversity of human language created the possibility of a new form of imagined community, which in its basic morphology set the stage for the modern nation” (p. 46). In this regard, capitalism and print technology made it possible to conceive of the modern nation as an imagined community by assimilating, and thereby reducing, the diversity of spoken language to a few ideographs. This, in turn, gave rise to a national consciousness in three important ways. First, print-languages made communication possible across time and space, creating a far greater number of readership and connecting them within the sphere of an imagined community. Furthermore, print-capitalism “gave a new fixity to language, which in the long run helped to build that image of antiquity so central to the subjective idea of the nation” (p. 44). The fixity of language also gave rise to privileged dialects that many scholars in Rhetoric and Composition and Second Language Acquisition (SLA) have interrogated. Scholars in the field of SLA, most notably Norton, have employed Anderson’s concept of imagined community to investigate the relationship between imagination, participation, and language learning.

Participation, Imagined Communities, and Language Investment

Inspired by the works of Lave and Wenger (1991), Wenger (1998), and Anderson (1991), Norton (2001) introduces the concepts of non-participation and imagined community to SLA theory. She applies these concepts to examine the relationship between second language learners' imagined communities and imagined identities, and the implications they have for language learning. In her work, Norton investigates the learning trajectories of two adult language learners who withdrew from their ESL course. One of the learners was Katarina, an immigrant from Poland, who expressed a desire to enroll in a computer course to advance her professional career. When her ESL teacher discouraged her from taking a computer course because her command of English was not "good enough," she reacted with anger and indignation, refusing to participate and ultimately withdrawing from the ESL class. Norton sees Katarina's reaction stemming from a disjuncture between the teacher's curriculum goals and the learner's investment in her imagined community (p. 170). Before immigrating to Canada, Katarina enjoyed a professional career as a teacher, along with the professional status the job afforded her. Although she did not secure a professional job in Canada, having to work instead as a part-time homemaker for the Community Service, Katarina imagined herself among the members of the professional class. By discouraging her from enrolling in a computer course, Katarina's ESL teacher not only "positioned her as a 'mere' immigrant" who did not meet the prerequisite of having the language competency to complete the course but also denied her of a professional identity in her imagined community (p. 243). Much like Katarina, Felicia, a language learner from Peru, enjoyed a privileged lifestyle in her native country, and while in Canada, she imagined herself as a member of the privileged

class. Peru, thus, takes on added significance for Felicia who regarded herself not as an immigrant but rather a wealthy Peruvian, but when Peru, and by extension her Peruvian identity, was not validated by her ESL teacher, Felicia reacted angrily by withdrawing from her class. Norton's work inaugurates the study that examines the connections between language learning, imagined community, and participation, and it has spawned similar studies that investigate these relationships among foreign language learners. Kinginger (2004), for instance, traces the foreign language trajectories of Alice who imagines an idealized France characterized by elegance and refinement. It is this romanticized image, Kinginger suggests, that explains Alice's investment in the language prior to her sojourn in France. However, the France that Alice actually experiences challenged her imagined community that she self-fashioned and desired to belong.

The discussion of imagination dominates the 2003 special issue in the *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education*, fostering a range of research interests that relate language identities and imagined communities. In addition to work with language learners' imagined communities, scholars have examined how bilingual serving institutions' imposed visions of their students' communities, in which they will participate, shape and drive educational policies and practices that ultimately impact the identities of the language learners (Kanno, 2003). Still others have employed various approaches traditionally used by critical discourse analyst to examine the discourse of inspection reports. The discourse of such reports "racializes the cultural practices of Asian minorities, defining them as alien and foreign" (p. 331). Specifically, the study examines the ways in which inspection reports repudiate the cultural practice of many Asian families of visiting their heritage country and see such a practice as impeding their

children's success in the imagined community of successful learners.

Participation, Learning, and Identities

Learning to become a member entails participation in communities of practice, and with legitimate peripheral access, people learn of the practices that constitute the community. For instance, Henry's earliest memories of his engagement with the Vietnamese community include his family's frequent visits to Garden Grove and Westminster, California, homes to one of the largest concentration of Vietnamese communities. They dined at restaurants, visited family friends, and participated in family functions. His involvement with these communities were further enhanced when he began training in Binh Dinh—a traditional Vietnamese martial art designed “to repel the Chinese out of Vietnam”—under the tutelage of his friend's father who imported the martial art form to the U.S. For Henry, Binh Dinh offered multiple points of entry into the Vietnamese community and enabled him to improve his language skills, while participating in the community's practices. In the interview, he indicated that, since his martial arts teachers gave commands in Vietnamese only, language learning and practicing martial arts techniques were deeply intertwined. Since he struggled with the language, he described his experience learning his teachers' Vietnamese commands by mimicking his peers' physical movements and gestures.

[W]hen they would tell you to get in line, they tell you in Vietnamese. You...you just copy the other kids. Or you turn left, I turn right; I see other kids; then I turn left. I mean it was...was very...very rudimentary. I mean you...you don't know too much of what's going on. I'm just copying and then when I'm copying, I'm listening; I'm learning at the same time, especially when umm...the adults are

lecturing you like “oh...your hands should be like this straight...or “your back should be flat or your legs should be a certain way.” You start learning like words through context cuz...cuz he’s talking and you’re...you’re watching. And that’s...that’s how you[’re] learning.

Learning to become a martial artist in his community of practice, Henry not only learned through traditional modes of teaching but also through peer-to-peer interaction. When information is circulated among peers, this form of learning is most common and advantageous for apprentices because the speed at which knowledge travels is rapid and effective. What this type of method of learning suggests is that “engaging in practice, rather than being its object, may well be a *condition* for the effectiveness of learning” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p.93). As a newcomer to Binh Dinh, Henry, through legitimate peripheral access, was given the opportunity not only to observe the practices that constitute his community but also participate in the communal activities in ways that encouraged the development of his martial arts skills. Since he struggled with understanding his heritage language, he found the Vietnamese commands at times incomprehensible. To learn, he mimicked his peers’ movements, which enabled him to associate the movements with the commands that were given in Vietnamese. In this instance, his learning in these types of productive activities was not structured by asymmetrical power relations that define typical master-apprentice relationships; but rather, his learning occurred “mostly in relations with other apprentices” who were circulating information about the proper movements. In Henry’s case, his peripheral access enabled him to engage his community of practice and learn martial arts techniques by mimicking his peers’ actions and movements. Through his active engagement in

practice, Henry not only observed and learned the proper martial arts techniques but also learned Vietnamese, which was an important step in initiating him into the communities of practice as a full participant.

Learning Vietnamese was an unintended consequence of Henry's engagement with his community of practice. This implies that heritage language proficiency does not precede interaction but rather is learned through the process of interaction. His experience demonstrates that "understanding and experience [...] are mutually constitutive" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p.52). Instead of perceiving learning as a disengaged bodily activity that is purely cerebral, it occurs in situated contexts with peers in communities of practice. This type of learning experience, whereby learning occurs in situated contexts among apprentices who organize opportunities for learning, is what Lave and Wenger call a *learning curriculum*. In their study, they differentiate between a *teaching curriculum* and a *learning curriculum* (p. 96-97). In a *teaching curriculum*, the teacher prescribes, and thus limits, what can be learned, and it "generates one circumscribed form of participation (school), preempting participation in ongoing practice as the legitimate source of learning opportunities" (p. 96-97). This model of learning is designed for newcomers. Whereas a *teaching curriculum* reifies a master-apprentice relationship, a *learning curriculum* "is an improvised practice" that "unfolds in opportunities for engagement in practice" (p. 93). In this regard, opportunities for learning are situated within the context of social relations. With respect to Henry's learning experience, his learning was initially structured by a teaching curriculum. Although his instructors circumscribed the specific martial arts techniques he was to learn, his heritage language learning occurred as a result of a *learning curriculum* that

organized opportunities for him to learn and practice speaking Vietnamese. As Henry noted, when he mimicked his peers' movements, he was simultaneously listening and learning his heritage language. Since his language skills were "rudimentary," he had learned to connect the movements with the Vietnamese commands to develop his heritage language proficiency. Henry's experience calls attention to the relationship between participation, learning, and experience. For Henry, whether it was learning martial arts movements or the Vietnamese language, his increasing participation in his community of practice was essential for his learning trajectory and evolving sense of identity as a martial artist.

Participating in communities of practice requires learning how to use and understand cultural artifacts and technologies. Raised in a household that values the maintenance of the Vietnamese language and culture, Jane has always been active in her Vietnamese community. She described her experiences interacting with other Vietnamese and participating in cultural activities during the annual Tet celebration, popularly known as Vietnamese New Year. During the Tet festival, many Vietnamese participate in time-honored customs, such as distributing lucky money in red envelopes, worshipping ancestors, and preparing special holiday foods. For Jane, Tet is an important holiday filled with busy activity in the home. In her interview, she recounted her experiences celebrating Tet, and she explained how the meaning of the holiday had added significance to her as she became older to participate in it in more complex ways.

Well, when I was younger, like when I was you know four or five, Tet to me was like "oh..I just get money in a red envelope. Cool. I get free money for nothing." Just *chuc tet* (new year's greeting) and I get money. And then, you know, I was

growing up and going through religious education, I started learning more about it. And I started realizing you know the money isn't just money. It's lucky money. You know, *lay hen*. And then my grandma, you know, she *them tuoi* and stuff so then "ok this year, the person lucky to step into the house first is the pig." So she'd say "oh...you or your mom?" So middle of the night, my parents would wake me up or my mom, and we'd go through the garage and out through the...umm...front yard and go into the front house and, you know, *chuc tuoi*. And they'll give me let's say...the boiling of the crab and all that. I was always, you know, participating for that. I dunno know. Like Tet is like, you know, not really considered a holiday in America. But like I always "oh...yay...Tet." Like I'm so excited for it.

As a child, Jane did not understand the significance of the artifacts of her community, partly because it was not made transparent to her. While social scientists who study the learning process have long taken artifacts as a given, Lave and Wenger take an analytical approach to the artifacts of practice, or what they term the "technology of practice," and its relations to access and understanding. As Lave and Wenger argue, artifacts embody a practice's history and heritage, and, thus, understanding their significance to ongoing practices requires more than learning how they operate but also how they help us to "connect with the history of the practice and to participate more directly in its cultural life" (p. 101). When viewed from this perspective, artifacts intersect with practices in highly complex ways that may or may not be immediately transparent to newcomers. For this reason, transparency is important to understand how "using artifacts and understanding their significance interact to become one learning process" (p.102). For

Jane, as a newcomer with legitimate peripheral access to her community of practice, the money she received in red envelopes held no socio-cultural significance other than its extrinsic, monetary value; however, Jane's involvement in religious education and ongoing relationship with members of her community of practice made it transparent that the money she received in red envelopes during the Tet festival "isn't just money. It's lucky money." Parents and grandparents performed the traditional ritual of *Mung Tuoi* whereby *li xi*, or "lucky money," is given to children on the day of the festival. By using the artifact and learning its socio-cultural significance in relation to Tet, Jane learned that the money in red envelopes signified luck and prosperity for the entire new year. As a peripheral participant, she "developed a view of what the whole enterprise" of Tet was about, "and what there [was] to be learned" (p.93). Through her active engagement with her community of practice, she learned what artifacts meant, and their transparency helped her appreciate their cultural use and significance. For participants like Henry and Jane, being active participants in their communities of practice shaped not only their learning but also their identities as members. Other participants, however, established an affinity with other ethnic Asians as a way to make sense of their experience as Asian Americans.

Whereas participants like Henry and Jane had direct access to members of their communities, other participants did not and thus had to rely on their shared affinity with other Asian ethnics to make sense of their experiences as Asian Americans. Tuan (1998) argues that her respondents sought out other Asians because of a shared cultural affinity. That is, they shared similar cultural practices, values, and experiences that led them to foster a community. The International Student Association (ISA) is an organization that

Kate found a sense of belonging. For her, ISA was “everything that I wanted from VSA (Vietnamese Student Association) that I didn’t get.” Unlike the VSA, the ISA organization offered her companionship and a sense of community. She spoke highly of the organization, praising it for creating an inclusive space and its friendly members.

[W]henever I would go to an ISA event, ...um...someone would also like approach me first, which is like very strange because I usually have to approach other people. But they’re very friendly. They reach out to you...umm...they would like want to get to know you better and like even just after one interaction, they would friend you on facebook. So, I was like, “wow, they are so nice. They are such a community.” And we would...umm...hold a lot of events [...] I think for ISA like everyone going into had the same expectation as I felt going into VSA. Like...ever...like everyone wanted to make new friends. And everyone wanted to be part of a group. Like one group. That’s the people in ISA but like for VSA, I’m not sure what it is but I don’t think it was culture-oriented. I think it was more...umm...let’s join this club because we’re Vietnamese. But I only go if my friend is going with me.

As Kate suggested, leadership in VSA lacked the vision and purpose of unifying its members towards a common enterprise. Without a sense of purpose or direction, people joined “this club because [they were] Vietnamese.” Achieving group solidarity and a sense of belonging occurs, in part, by aligning our energies for a common purpose, and the common purpose they sought to achieve was inclusive in scope. Unlike the VSA, which catered specifically for persons of Vietnamese heritage, the ISA, as the name suggests, was international in scope, seeking to bring together students across the campus

to align their efforts and energies for the purposes of establishing an international group, a form of belonging that Wenger describes is through alignment (p.178-187). As Wenger states, “alignment is a mode of belonging that is not confined to mutual engagement. The process of alignment bridges time and space to form broader enterprises so that participants become connected through the coordination of their energies, actions, and practices” (p.179). As Kate’s experience shows, she expressed more interest in actively participating in the ISA not only because the group members were friendly but also because they worked towards the common effort of a shared enterprise. That is, ISA members aligned their energies, actions, and practices towards the common enterprise of creating an inclusive space whereby participants of different backgrounds sought to “make new friends” by promoting cross-cultural understanding. As a result of these coordinated efforts, the ISA held “a lot of events” that celebrated different cultural practices.

The identities of participants shifted in response to a changing socio-cultural environment that offered them new opportunities to learn and participate in different practices. Having been uprooted from her home in Phoenix, AZ, Jane was sent to live in Vietnam for six months where she was enrolled in school. The experience of going to school there was jarring because she was unaccustomed to the types of rituals.

Umm...so we all...it’s it’s very different like in the morning. Uhh...we’d get to school, and there’s like a ritual like you practice. The professor would come in, we’d stand up and we’d go ummm ‘good morning, professor’ and professor would tell you to sit down. And so you would sit down. And that’s kind of like the older level cause you learn more respect...cause I kinda got a view...a view of

both. Like the younger and older. [...] Ummm...so you'd greet the teacher. He'd let you sit. ummm...and then you learn what you need to learn for the day with the older class. In the morning like you get there, like they all have the whole school out on the in the courtyard? And everyone is doing Tae Bo. Yeah...like they make you do that in the morning...and I was like this is weird like [chuckles] I've never done this before. And everyone knew what to do and I was just like uhhh...like looking around like trying to go along with everyone's doing. And like this is pretty strange. But uh...I found myself missing the culture a lot over there..umm...

Having peripheral access to this community of practice, Jane was a keen observer of the morning rituals that contrasted sharply with her experience in America. The morning ritual of greeting the professor, for instance, is a cultural practice that signifies respect. Jane noticed that this gesture was performed by upperclassmen who conferred a greater degree of respect towards their teachers than underclassmen. What was particularly striking for Jane were the outdoor activities in which she and her classmates engaged. The morning activities included performing Tae Bo. Both of these experiences signify an important shift in Jane's learning and identity. Although she was familiar with the honorific system in Vietnamese cultural practices that differentiated individuals based on age, she was unaware of the practices in Vietnam. This impacted how Vietnamese cultural practices are enacted in communicative situations and how she understood herself in relations to those practices. As she noted in her interview, she could not carry over the Vietnamese cultural practices that she learned in US and integrate them in Vietnam. As a result, she experienced a change in her conception as a Vietnamese

person. As a legitimate peripheral participant, however, she was given the opportunity to learn what these rituals meant, and her learning trajectory was a result of mimicking her peers. For these participants, the more they continued participating in their communities of practice, the further their understanding and status within the community evolved.

The evolving identities of newcomers must be understood in relation to their changing status and increased participation. Their increasing participation not only involves greater responsibility but also entails a more complex sense of who they are. This change in identity was typified by Henry and Jane whose increasing participation in their communities led to changes in how they were positioned. For instance, the more Henry participated in Binh Dinh, the more his social relations continually evolved, along with his knowledge and skill sets and responsibilities. In his interview, Henry described greeting practices practitioners of Binh Dinh must perform before entering their training facility.

[I]n martial arts, you show up early. Your duties...to say “hello”, right? To greet people. Your first duty is when you show up, you walk straight to the original grandmaster’s photo, and you...ummm...I don’t know the English word is called but *bai to*. Like you...ahh...you *cho* or you greet the photo. And then you greet the master, and then, it wasn’t really necessary but you can also greet the other black belts like you would say hi in...in a formal fashion. Like a martial arts fashion like a bow or something. But instead of a bow, we had...umm...a hand signal. But...umm...that’s...that’s where we learned from...from greet people, you know. You have to say “hi” to people; you gotta respect your elders; you gotta do x and y before you...are able to become a kid and play around in martial

arts. But also other things like umm...when we tested, it...it was special.

We...ahh...they lined us all up. We're all able to...again...I don't know the English word, *cung bang tho cung cua so to*. So...you [stutters] light...literally light the incense for...ah...for...for the master...like you pray.

As a former peripheral participant, Henry observed and enacted the appropriate practices regulating formal methods of acknowledgment. The more he participated in Binh Dinh, his social relations and status changed. The masters he had revered from a distance were now close and considered his “brothers.” In addition, his status within the community of practice has changed, and he has achieved old-timer status by assuming the role of martial arts instructor who is responsible for initiating newcomers into the practices of his community. This is most evident in the ways in which he spoke about the practice of acknowledgment in the social hierarchy. In the instance above, he wavered back and forth in his interview from speaking about his experience as a newcomer who engaged in the community’s rituals before he and his peers could “become a kid and play around” to his current position as a seasoned martial artist who gave commands to an imaginary audience. His increasing participation, changing social relationship and old-timer status within the community reveal an evolving identity from a peripheral participant to a full fledge member who upheld traditional practices that shaped and defined his community of practice.

Upholding traditional practices also meant resisting assimilation with mainstream culture and society, which have led to “the reduction of cultural heterogeneity and convergence in patterns of language, thinking, feeling, and behavior” (Zhou, 2001). In other words, ethnic differences are erased and behavior patterns in thoughts and feelings

become homogenized and indistinguishable from the dominant culture. The impact of assimilation becomes especially pronounced among adolescent immigrants who seek acceptance from the mainstream culture. In her study of the changing social, economic, and cultural lives of Vietnamese immigrants, Kibria (1993) argues that “both young and old conceded, younger Vietnamese Americans were becoming more American in many ways, ranging from [...] modes of dress [...] to their increasingly individualistic orientation toward life” (p. 146). As member who has gained old-timer status, Jane sought to resist assimilation, both within herself and especially her younger sisters, by enforcing the use of traditional Vietnamese dresses to ensure that her sisters continue engaging in the social practices of their community.

Umm...my sisters like...they're still...they're still pretty you know good with the language and the culture and everything. But then they're just like...they're more...a bit more Americanized now. Like...you know I tell them “oh...go put on your *ao di* (traditional Vietnamese dress) for church.” They'll be like “eww...no...I can wear shorts and a t-shirt.” And I'm just like, “GO PUT ON YOUR *AO DI*.” And they'll be like “no.” so then I'll have to yell so loud to the extent that they know I'm being serious. And they'll put it on, but they'll give me like that face where they're like “ugh...like why do I have to wear this?”

The *ao di* constitutes an important cultural signifier of group membership and Jane's Vietnamese identity. For her sisters to prefer shorts and a t-shirt over the traditional Vietnamese dress signified to Jane that they were not only “more Americanized now” but also denied their Vietnamese cultural heritage. In the context of her interaction with her sisters, Jane positioned them as Americans who refused to participate in the practices of

their community by not performing their Vietnamese identity. In this instance, language alone did not determine the level of social interaction but rather the degree to which members participated in cultural practices that defined in group membership. Jane positioned herself as an old-timer who demanded her sisters' participation; however, they resisted how she had positioned them and refused to abide by her commands. In response, Jane angrily demanded that they participate in their cultural practices. Her sisters acquiesce to Jane's rather forceful command. The excerpt highlights Jane's evolving identity as an old-timer in practices of her community. Once a newcomer, she gained legitimate peripheral access to her community that enabled her to learn from old-timers and develop a more profound appreciation for its cultural practices. Now positioned as an old-timer, she sought to instill a respect for cultural practices in members of her community.

As these accounts illustrate, group membership was not predicated on heritage language proficiency alone. Rather, learning to become a member is a process of increasing participation in communities of practice. As newcomers to their communities, participants first gain access through legitimate peripheral participation. At this stage, they observe how their communities conduct and organize themselves, learn both the explicit and tacit rules, and understand how practices are negotiated in interaction. In this regard, newcomers learn to become members by interacting with old-timers, and this learning occurs as a result of a learning curriculum. As their participation increases, so too do their learning and relationship with members of their community. Their continued engagement entails not only greater responsibility but also a change in their identities. Because of peripheral access, these participants were able to engage in the practices of

their communities and thereby initiate learning that identified them as community members. But because these participants encounter communities of practice to which we do not belong and do not gain peripheral access to participate, they are often marginalized as non-participating members.

No Access Allowed: Marginalization and Non-Participation of Non-members

Individuals encounter communities of practice to which they do not belong, inevitably making non-participation a lived reality. As Wenger contends, “because our own practices usually include elements from other practices, and because we inevitably come in contact with communities of practice to which we do not belong, non-participation is an inevitable part of living in a landscape of practices” (p.165). Wenger distinguishes between two forms of non-participation: peripherality and marginality. Peripherality requires some form of non-participation to make full participation possible. In the previous discussion, the participants, who as newcomers gained legitimate peripheral access to their communities of practice, observed and learned as non-participants in the practices of their communities. But their non-participation “was an initial relation that allowed them to become involved” in their communities’ practices (p.166). However, the form of non-participation that defines marginality prevents full participation (p.165-66). For the purposes of my discussion, I now turn to forms of non-participation defined by marginality.

While individuals gained peripheral access in their communities of practice, they found themselves marginalized by members of other Vietnamese communities that resulted in their non-participation. They had constructed their relationship with others based on a shared cultural identity, and they position themselves as peripheral

participants. Although Henry was an active participant in the practices of his Vietnamese martial arts community, he was a non-participating member in other areas of social life. When his family moved from Fountain Valley to Huntington Beach, California, he entered a new high school that was predominately Vietnamese. Excited, he attempted to befriend them because he saw them as “my people.” However, he soon realized that sharing a cultural history did not guarantee his admission into different communities of practice. In one example, Henry described his attempts at interacting with other Vietnamese, believing that cultural similarity breeds familiarity.

I know these people. We...we...can get along. And I remember dropping a line...ummm...that was so popular ‘eh...eh...eh...foo. How you doing foo?’ [to which other Vietnamese people replied]: “we don’t use the word ‘foo’ anymore.” I started...I started ostracizing them too. I’m like...I’m like ‘man, y’all don’t represent me.’

This brief exchange highlights the complex negotiating of identities in social interaction. Henry attempted to establish rapport with other Vietnamese-Americans by addressing them as “foo.” His informal greeting was meant to convey familiarity and camaraderie with them based on his assumption of a shared cultural identity. For this reason, he believed that his cultural affinity with other Vietnamese-Americans granted him legitimate peripheral access to the new community he had entered since he “knows these people. We [...] can get along.” In this instance, Henry perceived them as part of a homogenous Vietnamese community; thus, he positioned them as friends within his social network. However, they rejected how he had positioned them and denied his claims to group membership. Stating that “we don’t use the term ‘foo’ anymore,” they

sought to exclude and marginalize Henry by de-legitimizing his identity as a peripheral participant in their community of practice. Their efforts at marginalizing him is further reinforced by their use of the pronoun “we,” which placed him outside their social network. In response, Henry resisted their efforts by positioning them as “weenies” who neither represented him nor the culture in ways that he understood it because they did not exhibit the tough characteristics with which he was familiar. Positioning them as weaklings justified his reasoning for ostracizing them. Despite sharing a common heritage language, he could not see himself in them, so he responded by excommunicating those who displayed weakness of character.

Even if participants gained acceptance, the social stratification within a community of practice marginalized them from gaining peripheral access to fully participate as active members. The experience of alienation stemmed from intragroup hierarchies that separated newcomers from old-timers. Kate, for instance, was disillusioned by the experience of alienation when she first joined the Vietnamese Student Association (VSA). When she was a freshman in college, Kate sought to connect with the Vietnamese community on campus by joining the VSA. She was initially attracted to the idea that such organizations exist to provide space for like-minded individuals to interact; however, after having attended VSA meetings throughout her freshman year, she felt as though the VSA did not meet her needs and, therefore, decided to rescind her membership. Kate expressed particular frustration at VSA members who created cliques, which had the effect of alienating new members from actively participating in social activities. Newcomers were often marginalized and denied peripheral access to observe and participate in the practices of this community.

[W]henever we would go or I would go to a VSA meeting, it would mostly be...it would be like a little section of culture. Well, first there would be an ice-breaker where the groups that were formed within VSA would still only interact with each other. Umm...and I think that included like the leadership within VSA as well, even though they are receptive to new members, they still like kept to themselves mainly. They mainly like only joked with one another, so it was more like...I dunno know...like...it was really easy for people to feel...feel alienated because I know a lot of my other friends tried joining VSA as well. But it just wasn't like as inclusive as like culture-oriented as I thought it was, so I...I...quit VSA because of that.

Kate refused to participate in VSA because she was not given peripheral access to it. First, she could not relate to the other members of the organization, despite being ethnically Vietnamese. She was especially critical of members who exhibited rowdiness, a behavior with which she could not identify, and it furthered her sense of alienation. Second, and most importantly, the VSA failed to achieve the cultural cohesiveness it was meant to foster and that she had come to expect; in its stead, she found the organization sharply divided along membership lines, between newcomers and old-timers. In this instance, Kate's non-participation is characterized by marginality. As a newcomer, Kate felt alienated from the old-timers of these organizations who interacted amongst themselves and who regulated the degree of newcomers' interaction with old-timers, thus preventing newcomers from full participation. As Kate indicated, members of the VSA would only interact with newcomers if "they actually want to get to know you." Otherwise, old timers have their "own culture" that makes it "really easy for people to

feel...feel alienated.” Not surprisingly, Kate’s marginalized status in this community of practice made her feel as though she “was never really able to break that barrier” and be part of VSA because she was positioned as an outsider who was denied peripheral access. The social hierarchies ensured that the interests of the select few, mainly the old-timers, had access to the available resources of the community, such as people, places, and objects, while new members were left with no means of “break[ing] that barrier” that would allow for full-participation and membership.

Individuals who have always positioned themselves as Vietnamese, and spoke their heritage language rather proficiently, expressed frustration at being marginalized by other Vietnamese for being American. For instance, Jane attempted to associate with the community of Vietnamese international students in high school. Because she strongly identified with her Vietnamese identity, she sought people whom she thought would easily accept her as a member of their group. When recounting the experience, she expressed confidence that Vietnamese international students would recognize her as one of their own, but as her narrative unfolded, she became increasingly confused and frustrated that they positioned her as an Americanized Vietnamese, an identity that was used to justify her marginalization. When introducing herself to a group of Vietnamese international students, she spoke her heritage language to identify with them.

[D]uring lunch time, I had lunch with them so then, you know, I’d come and say “hey, you know, how are you guys?” and stuff. And they’d just turn around and they’d walk away. And I’m just like “well, that’s hurtful.” And, you know, I would ask them like you know “why you guys doing this?” and they’re like “because you’re not Vietnamese.” They’re like “You’re not Vietnamese.” And

I'm like "yes I am. I speak Vietnamese; I write Vietnamese; I eat Vietnamese food. You know, I do all this exactly like you guys." And they're like "no you don't." and I'm like, "you know, it's so hurtful like just because I was born in you know America, you're going to discriminate that I am not Vietnamese?"

In this instance, she used her heritage language to mediate her interaction with them and to establish a shared linguistic and cultural connection. In doing so, Jane attempted to reflexively position herself as a peripheral participant in their community. Jane's ability to speak her heritage language, however, did not ensure her peripheral access to the community of practice in which she sought membership. Instead, they marginalized Jane by refusing to acknowledge her attempts at communicating with them, and they denied the legitimacy of her Vietnamese identity by positioning her as an American who was not born in Vietnam and, thus, was unable to fully claim a Vietnamese cultural identity.

Here, the role of cultural heritage contributes to the community's understanding of what constitutes a legitimate Vietnamese person. Being labeled American signified a complete rejection of her "horizontal comradeship" with members of the Vietnamese international student community, and it served as a reminder that she, despite the ease with which she spoke her HL, is a non-participating member of their community of practice. Their rejection "denied [her] access to a wide range of ongoing activity, old-timers, and other members of the community; and to information, resources, and opportunities for participation" (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 101). While they actively sought to marginalize her, she asserted her Vietnamese identity by appealing to their shared cultural practices.

Jane resisted their claim that “you’re not Vietnamese” by appealing to their common cultural heritage. As a retort, she stated “yes I am. I speak Vietnamese; I write Vietnamese; I eat Vietnamese food. You know, I do all this exactly like you guys.” She attempted to reaffirm the authenticity of her Vietnamese cultural identity and position herself as a group member. Nonetheless, they refused to recognize her reflexive positioning by consistently denying her claims of a shared cultural heritage. The rejection Jane experienced was an emotionally difficult reality she had to confront that not only profoundly impacted the way she perceived herself but also forced her to question her identity. Once seeing herself firmly rooted in her Vietnamese community, she began to “feel less Vietnamese cuz in a sense it made me feel more American.” This change in her self-identified Vietnamese identity marked a shift in her entire outlook of what it meant to be Vietnamese. In this context, being American meant that she was disconnected from an imagined Vietnamese culture in which she had assumed old-timer status. Distressed at being rejected, Jane refused to participate and engage with the community members from which she sought validation.

Like Jane, Tiffany was marginalized as a result of her American cultural identity. In Vietnam, she struggled not only adjusting to the cultural life there but also connecting with other Vietnamese with whom she believed she shared a common culture.

[It] wasn’t as easy to communicate. Like I didn’t make friends as easily cause I couldn’t. I felt like I couldn’t as oppose to like the Vietnamese I would meet in America. The Vietnamese in my...over there, I felt like I couldn’t connect with them and you thought you could because like you’re Vietnamese but they’re from Vietnam and you’re not.

Tiffany's interaction with members of different communities of practice challenged her Vietnamese identity. While she spoke her HL proficiently and used it to communicate with them, she nonetheless found it increasingly difficult to "communicate" and "make friends [...] easily" as she had anticipated. Tiffany had hoped to interact with them based on a shared cultural identity and thus positioned them among her sociocultural network, but she took for granted that her experiences and cultural frame of reference were at odds with theirs, which made it feel "like I couldn't connect with them." Tiffany's description illustrates that neither a shared Vietnamese cultural heritage nor her HL proficiency guaranteed her access to their community of practice. The community to which she desired access marginalized her from participating by positioning her as an American, and the experience of marginalization reified their cultural distinction. She was a non-participating member of their community because she did not understand the existing socio-cultural practices that shaped their community. Moreover, their charge that "you're not Vietnamese here" signified their refusal to recognize her Vietnamese identity that would have enabled her to participate and interact with their community.

When interacting with other Vietnamese outside their communities of practice, Henry, Kate, Jane, and Tiffany anticipated that their shared cultural heritage would afford them access to communities to which they did not belong. However, as they realized, their shared cultural heritage did not grant them access to communities in which they sought membership. Instead, they were marginalized and positioned as non-participants who, as a result of being marginalized, withdrew from interacting with other Vietnamese. Their expectations of a shared cultural community were constructed from their imagined fraternity across time and space with other Vietnamese. In their minds, they created an

imagined community that reflected their desire for horizontal comradeship among the Vietnamese. By imagining this community, they were also imagining themselves and others belonging to a homogenous cultural heritage (Norton, 2000). How, then, do we understand Henry, Kate, Jane, and Tiffany's response to being marginalized by other Vietnamese? How do their experiences of rejection by members in these communities shape their interaction and redefine the boundaries of their imagined communities? For these participants, imagination played an important role in shaping how they interacted with members outside their imagined communities by defining and demarcating the boundaries that constitutes insiders and outsiders.

Imagined Communities, Participation, and Non-Participation

Individuals construct their identities not only through their direct engagement in communities of practice but also through their imagination. Wenger (1998) describes imagination as an important mode of belonging that is important to how individuals view themselves in relation to members of communities of practice to which they do not belong. Wenger posits that "the concept of imagination refers to a process of expanding our self by transcending our time and space and creating new images of the world and ourselves. Imagination in this sense is looking at an apple seed and seeing a tree." (p. 176). Scholars in the field of Applied Linguistics have taken up the idea of imagination as a lens through which they examine the language-learning trajectory of second language learners. Analyzing second language learners' imagined communities, Norton (2000) argues that a "learner's imagined community invite[s] an imagined identity" (p.166). As Norton (2013) states, imagined communities are "also a community of the imagination, a desired community that offers possibilities for an enhanced range of

identity options in the future” (p. 3). When Henry, Kate, Jane, and Tiffany imagined their communities, they were also re-imagining themselves in relations to those communities. They saw themselves as part of a homogenous Vietnamese community that transcended both time and space. However, when marginalized by other Vietnamese, they resisted such marginalization by withdrawing themselves from social interaction and reimagining their interlocutors outside their imagined community.

To resist marginalization, participants imagined a hyper-masculinized community as a way to emasculate, and thereby reject, those from whom they felt alienated. Gender has long been perceived as a series of socially enacted performances (Butler, 1990), and persons who deviate from such performances are identified as acting outside heteronormative behavior. Exploring his own gender performance, Young (2004) examines the intersections of gender, race, class, and literacy. He recounts his experiences being raised in the inner city and positioning himself within and against the various discourses of black masculinity that his student, Cam, embodied. Cam’s “I don’t give a fuck” disposition was a “forceful, but false, assertion of indifference” that troubled Young because he himself had employed the vernacular phrasing to “mask the fear and pain that I experienced while growing up as a rather bookish boy with a high-pitched voice in the ghetto—a boy often teased, called sissy and fag, because I liked performing in school plays instead of playing sports” (p. 697). Admittedly, Young states that he had none of the “raunchy macho,” “special [pimp] walk,” or “distinctive handshakes and slang” that would identify him as a black heterosexual male (p. 697). In addition, because he sought school as a refuge from inner city life, he was often emasculated for disidentifying with the masculine identity.

For Henry, his hyper-masculinized, imagined community is predicated on his interests in Vietnamese military history and martial arts training. His early exposure to the historical accounts of Vietnamese's resistance against foreign invasion and colonization fueled his imagination of ancient heroes. Told at a time when he was particularly fascinated with the "Romance of the Three Kingdom and the...the Dynasty Warrior games," narratives of Vietnamese military prowess proved influential in shaping the imagined community with which he strongly identified.

[the games are about] ancient warriors and so my father and my teachers feed off that and gave me our versions of...of the stories. Because we have our own people, and we have our own history. I...I...I guess my...my teachers and my...my father knew how to tell stories [to] me to make me inspired. Like "oh yeah, did you know how the Chinese got...the Chinese—the Romans...they got beat by the Mongols, but then the Vietnamese...we repel them 3 times. Not once, not twice, not...not...not three times. The Japanese only did it once. They...they got lucky with the tsunami, but we...we used tactics."

Henry exhibited a sense of pride in recounting these historical events, stating how the Vietnamese fended off efforts against the Chinese and Mongols who once sought to dominate the country. So influential were these historical narratives to Henry's imagination that he harbored the "idea of this warrior mentality of what Vietnamese people were. They were tough; they were strong. Uhh...they fought the Chinese for thousands of years." Through his imagination, Henry transcended time and space to create new images of himself and the world in which he inhabited. Since Binh Dinh was invented by three Vietnamese brothers who sought to repel the Chinese from Vietnam,

Henry imagined himself and his martial arts community as part of a legacy of Vietnamese warriors. Thus, when he practiced Binh Dinh and learned of its historical significance, he saw himself deeply intertwined with a much larger community of martial arts practitioners across time and space. Identifying himself with the Vietnamese of times past, Henry made a bid to claim legitimate membership with the community he imagined. It is through his imagination that he felt connected to them, and as a result, he actively participated in his community of practice because his experiences and ways of being have been validated.

It is against the backdrop of Henry's highly complex imagination of his community that we begin to understand his motives for not participating with the Vietnamese of his generation. The hyper-masculinized Vietnamese community he constructs is used as a litmus test to measure the "toughness" of other Vietnamese and justify his reasoning for rejecting those whom he had initially perceived as his "people." By comparison to the members of his imagined community, he perceived his peers as "weenies" who "seriously [...] do not represent what my mind holds what Vietnamese people are. We're supposed to be warriors." Instead of being warriors, they were "off trying to be the stereotypical nerd, so I...I...I had nothing to do with them." Thus, he refused to participate with the Vietnamese of his generation because, by his estimation, they are weak and docile, and they do not represent the strength, courage, and tenacity exemplified by important figures in Vietnamese history and members of his martial arts community. Henry's investment in his imagined community led to his desire to "elevate my people through [...] aggressive means, rather than passive education." The Vietnamese of his generation apparently did not share his thinking "cuz [...] the Asian

cats that were my age weren't doing the same thing I was doing." Since Henry did not see them as legitimate Vietnamese, he rejected them and "look[ed] for confrontation and...and...and fierceness in my friends," so, instead, he "actually hung out with a lot of Hispanic kids who fancied themselves being tough." Seeking friendship with those whom he regarded as tough was a way of performing his masculine identity, all the while preserving the image he constructs of his Vietnamese community.

Here and elsewhere in his interview, Henry protects the integrity of his imagined community through his performance of masculine identity that, according to Young, is exemplified by the ways in which he effeminizes his interlocutors as the "stereotypical nerd" who are passively educated. School, according to Young, is construed as "a place best suited for girls" and a "site of effeminacy" (p. 699). Not surprisingly, Henry may have perceived school as sites of indoctrinating effeminate behavior because of the stigma attached to Asian Americans as model minorities. By asserting his hyper masculinized identity, he challenged and resisted assimilating into the model minority stereotype that defines Asian American men as "insufficiently masculine" (Young, 2004, p.703). Instead of subscribing to this model, he constructed a masculine identity by evoking combat metaphors, historical figures and events to not only highlight his self-assured masculinity but also to dis-identify with those who have resigned to accept their model minority status, or being the "typical nerd."

Despite his refusal to participate with them, he was, nonetheless, conflicted because he struggled to reconcile the differences between his imagination and the reality of what Vietnamese people are.

[During] my adolescents I do say I was very confused because there was this rejection of actual Vietnamese people of what I thought was not meeting the...the standards of what Vietnamese people should be. I mean hearing stories from my dad and his college at college, altercations, and [...] conquest, I'm...I'm...I'm...I'm thinking you guys aren't cut out to be Vietnamese. But then...it's...it's really confusing just be...just to know what you think and what reality is.

The strength of Henry's imagination, indeed, proved so powerful that he expressed guilt for rejecting his peers based on what he imagined Vietnamese were supposed to represent. The conflict was a point of contention and confusion for Henry because he was aware of the contradiction of having pride in his Vietnamese heritage while ostracizing a large population of his peers. It was not until years later that he managed to reconcile these differences.

Participants also constructed their relationship with members of their imagined community based on social class. For Kate, socio-economic class and culture deeply intertwine in ways that largely define the different types of imagined communities she constructs and to which she feels a sense of belonging. One of these communities is the Vietnamese in Irvine, California. As Kate suggested, their economic affluence affords them the opportunity to live an "Americanized" lifestyle that is free from the cultural trappings often associated with traditional Vietnamese customs and practices. She has seen many Vietnamese assimilating into mainstream American culture, and they express no interest in furthering their cultural knowledge and fulfilling their filial obligations. However, Kate has observed that the Vietnamese in Westminster, California conduct

themselves differently from their Irvine counterparts. Because they live in a predominately Vietnamese community, they “have a very good sense of their culture,” and “they just wouldn’t be like immersed in American culture as much as others as the Irvine people.” Kate ascribed these characteristics to less affluent and more traditional Vietnamese communities whose members have a greater responsibility to fulfill their filial obligations—working a part-time job to augment the family’s earnings or serving as language brokers for non-English speaking family members. It is between these two imagined communities that she positions herself. On the one hand, being raised in an economically affluent household, Kate identified with her imagined Irvine community but did not necessarily feel as though she belonged to it. On the other hand, because she desires to reconnect with her heritage, she felt a sense of cultural connection to her imagined community in Westminster.

When we understand the central role socio-economic class plays in her imagined communities, Kate’s reaction to the two different campus organizations takes on added significance. Her criticism against the VSA for its failure to promote cultural consciousness, its fragmented organization, and its weak leadership is characteristic of the imagined community in Irvine. As she stated, “the Vietnamese in Irvine are pretty similar to the VSA people. Just they kinda live in the present and like do normal American college student things like go out to parties and stuff like that.” Thus, they have fully assimilated as Americans, luxuriating in the American lifestyle that their families’ wealth affords them. For these reasons, she refused to participate with members of the VSA because they did not represent, in her mind, what it meant to be an authentic Vietnamese. However, Kate felt a sense of belonging in the ISA because its members

more closely resembled what she imagined authentic Vietnamese to be. In her conception, they were connected to their culture and were far less Americanized than their VSA counterparts. They were more traditional in their practices, upholding their obligatory ties to their families, practices she found attractive in traditional Vietnamese homes. Although Kate was far removed from the economic realities of the members of her imagined community, she was, nonetheless, closely connected to them because of their strong sense of culture.

Participating in their community's practices played an important role in helping individuals construct their imagined Vietnamese community. This is typified in both Jane and Tiffany's description when interacting with members outside their communities of practice. In her interview, she recounted stories of her active participation in Vietnamese traditions, customs, and practices, all of which positioned her as an old-timer in her communities of practice. When narrating her life experience, Jane spoke confidently about how she "felt really proud of being Vietnamese. You know I didn't want to hide it."

Umm...of course because the Vietnamese church is huge at *Tet* in Phoenix. So like, you know, with the whole *ao dai* and you know the food, and *mua lan*, and all that. You know I participated in that, you know, doing some drumming, like being part of the *mu lang* and being like a baby Buddha [chuckles], and like just like everything in general. I loved wearing the *ao dais* when I was younger, you know. I had like a whole closet full of different colors that my uncles would send over from Vietnam. So like I...I just love the culture in general.

Unlike her friends who were ashamed of identifying themselves as Vietnamese, Jane proudly boasted of her identity. In this instance, she recounted her active participation in her communities of practice. She recalled how she, as a young child, ate traditional Vietnamese food, wore traditional Vietnamese dresses, and participated in traditional Vietnamese festivities, such as *mua lan*. She expressed “love [for] the culture in general” because it gave her a sense of belonging within her community and with others across time and space.

Her refusal to participate with the community of international students is a reaction to the discrimination she faced for being American and having her Vietnamese identity de-legitimized. When recounting her experience, Jane expressed hurt and frustration at not being recognized as a member of their community because she had always thought that her participation in all of the cultural activities legitimated her identity. Jane had never questioned her old-timer status in her imagined community because she spoke Vietnamese, wrote in Vietnamese, and ate Vietnamese food. By her estimation, she was no less Vietnamese than they because she did “all this exactly like you guys.” Despite her insistence, they refused to validate her Vietnamese identity. In response, she resisted their refusal by not participating in their community.

Tiffany constructed an imagined community that is reminiscent of her childhood experiences. She harbored an intense, emotional response by connecting it to physical locations that evoke memories of her past. Asian restaurants and supermarkets, in particular, are places where she feels the strongest connection with other Vietnamese people.

I feel like I connect with them more like when I go to like Lee Lee's or I go to like umm..that restaurant right next to Lee Lee's. Like you get more of a feel...It's kinda like what you felt when you would go with your parents as a kid to those kind of places. But now you're doing it by yourself. And you kinda like get that same like kinda like a déjà vu. But in like different shoes, I guess. [sniffs] and you kinda gain a sense like a little more at home versus like you meet other Vietnamese people your age, and like I dunno know...you just don't feel as much of a connection cuz there's some that are really holding on to that and there's some that like have let...really let it go. It's just like you can't relate as well as you do when you see something familiar.

Specific physical locations and memories of home intersect in ways that helped her connect with other Vietnamese people across time and space. In this instance, she referenced her memory grocery shopping or dining out at restaurants with family, practices that enabled her to envision an imagined community—of which she is apart—whenever she entered these familiar establishments. It is her longing for the familiar that she saw in others a connection that did not necessarily involve direct engagement. As Tiffany noted, it's “just like you can't relate as well as you do when you see something familiar.” Her non-participation with communities of practice in Vietnam can be understood with relation to her imagined community. In the U.S., she always perceived herself as a Vietnamese person because she practiced the culture and ate traditional Vietnamese foods. Much like Jane, she was invested in her Vietnamese identity.

Henry, Kate, Jane, and Tiffany attempted to participate in different communities because they had imagined themselves as part of a homogenous Vietnamese nation that

transcended time and space. However, when they were marginalized and not given peripheral access, they, in turn, responded by refusing to further their interaction with members of these communities. Their response reflects an attempt to resist marginalization, while also preserving the image of their imagined community. The community they imagine also plays an important role in their investment in their language learning and imagined, future identities.

Imagined Communities and the Future

The connections these participants felt to their imagined communities also had a profound impact on their heritage language maintenance. Generally, they sought to learn and improve their Vietnamese for a variety of reasons that included their desire to fulfill their future professional identities. Both Henry and Tiffany, for instance, invested in their Vietnamese language learning to participate with members of their imagined professional communities. As a student who intends to pursue his Ph.D. in history, Henry imagines himself writing a comprehensive account of the history of Vietnam, and to do such, he recognizes the importance of improving his Vietnamese reading and writing skills.

I want to focus my studies on...on Vietnamese history. I mean, everyone tells me like it's corrupt [...] I'll write the history for you. So I...I want to get back into the culture. I...I...I want to rebuild what I can with my own means. I mean that sounds really ambiguous but that's...that's what I want to do. I [stutters] want to make the Vietnamese culture like more available to people. I mean, it's more available now, but like when I was a kid, nothing...just word of mouth, especially cuz you...I couldn't read or write. Maybe I could be the first person to

thoroughly write in English and write well...[chuckles] on Vietnamese history. He described how it is essential for him to know the language to read the necessary texts that will help him reconstruct Vietnam's history. Henry is strongly committed to his professional goals in part because he has "always been attached to the Vietnamese community" and therefore wants "to make the Vietnamese culture [...] more available to people." That is, Henry desires to make the Vietnamese culture as socially accepted in the U.S. as Japanese and Korean pop culture.

Similarly, since she lived in Vietnam, Tiffany imagines herself working as an ambassador at the Vietnamese consulate in Ho Chi Minh City to improve social relations between Vietnam and the U.S.

Umm...I wanna work overseas. I...I really umm...love that. I'm in touch with...partly in touch with my culture and I wanna gain more from that. I wanna work overseas and work at the embassy in Vietnam. Umm...play a part into the what I've learned over here and take that over there. And use that to settle relations. Like not only between these two countries but other ones as well. And then...cuz you really need that sense of umm...cultural understanding in order to do that. And I feel like that would be really useful from that.

Like Henry, Tiffany projects towards the future and sees herself as a member of her imagined Vietnamese community, which influences the career goals. In this excerpt, her desires for a future as an ambassador serve as a way for her to reconnect with her culture. She also wants to make the Vietnamese culture more accessible to people. While she recognized that there is a strong Vietnamese presence in the U.S., she stills wants to "find a way to put it out there more."

For these heritage speakers, knowledge of Vietnamese not only fulfilled their future, professional identities but also their desire to reconnect with members of their imagined community. One such person is Kate. Kate seeks to improve her Vietnamese language proficiency to actively participate with her family. As a child, she was reticent, remaining quiet as a display of respect to her elders, but her lack of participation with other Vietnamese left her “speaking like a child.” It was not until her grandparents discussed their lives with Kate that she began imagining herself as part of a Vietnamese community. Intrigued by her families’ stories of escape and survival from the Vietnam War, Kate incorporated such stories “into [her] identity.” As she stated, their stories “made me really appreciate and look up to them. It also made me want to be like them,” and to be like them, and, by extension, the communities of practice she imagined herself a part of, she expressed her desire to learn and improve her Vietnamese.

Conclusion

As I have been arguing thus far, language proficiency alone did not determine these participants’ level of participation in and across multiple communities of practice. Instead, becoming a member in their communities required that they gain legitimate peripheral access that enabled them to observe how old-timers engage in various communal practices. Through their ongoing participation in their communities of practice, newcomers become old-timers themselves and develop a strong sense of belonging. In addition to their direct engagement, participants gained a sense of belonging by imagining themselves as part of a larger Vietnamese community that transcended both time and space. Their imagination led them to believe that had legitimate peripheral access to communities to which they did not belong. However,

when engaging with members in these communities, they were marginalized and the legitimacy of their Vietnamese identities were denied. When they were denied membership, Henry, Kate, Jane, and Tiffany refused to participate from the communities of practice in which they had initially sought membership to preserve the vision of themselves as legitimate members in their imagined communities. Imagination, thus, served as a way for participants to connect with other Vietnamese beyond their immediate community and to share similar practices. A common practice that is shared by many children of immigrant parents is interpreting and translating, a practice now commonly referred to as language brokering. In the context of the U.S., language brokers serve an important function in helping non-English speaking members navigate the difficult socio-cultural terrain. For heritage language speakers like Henry, Kate, Jane, and Tiffany who struggled speaking Vietnamese, language brokering presents both challenges and rewards that help shape their evolving identities.

CHAPTER 4 HERITAGE SPEAKERS' LANGUAGE BROKERING AS AIDE TO FAMILY'S ADAPTABILITY AND SURVIVAL.

In 2010, the U.S. Census Bureau reported that of the 1,419,539 Vietnamese people ages 5 years and over, 33.1 percent of the population did not speak English well or did not speak it at all. For these individuals, interacting with English speakers becomes an increasingly difficult task that exacerbates social stress. To navigate the predominantly English speaking world in which they find themselves, they often rely upon language brokers who serve as mediators in a variety of social situations. For language brokers, brokering fulfills an important community practice that has long been a common phenomenon among many immigrant families, but because they often begin brokering at childhood or adolescence and continue through adulthood, some brokers assume such responsibility without much proficiency in their heritage languages. In chapter 2, I argued that heritage speakers, who often face linguistic discrimination from more proficient Vietnamese speakers, invest time and energy in learning their heritage language because their language learning intersects with their multiple identities and obligations towards their family. In chapter 3, I extend this argument by showing how the identities of HL speakers evolve and are negotiated over time in their interaction with ethnic Vietnamese in and outside of their communities of practice. In this chapter, I extend the discussion in chapter 2 and 3 by examining the practice of language and cultural brokering among these Vietnamese participants. Although many of them are not proficient in their heritage language, they, nonetheless, assume their identities as language and cultural brokers in order to support the normal functioning of the family. Because of the paucity of research on Vietnamese language brokering (Morales &

Hanson, 2005), this chapter seeks to contribute to the literature on language brokering. Findings from this chapter reveal what Trickett and Jones argue as the middle-of-the-road position with respect to the emotional impact and potential role reversal that language and cultural brokering has on children of immigrant parents.

Language Brokering

In the U.S., many adult immigrants with limited English proficiency often rely upon their children to translate and interpret across multiple languages in order to mediate interaction with predominantly English speakers. For children who translate and interpret on behalf of their family, they serve the important role of language brokers (Morales & Hanson, 2005; Wu & Kim, 2009; Tse, 1995; Weisskirch, 2007). While language brokering has long been a common practice among immigrant families, it has been under studied, and only recently, as late as the mid-1990s, has scholars consider it an important area of research that merits serious consideration (McQuillan & Tse, 1995; Morales & Hanson, 2005; Weisskirch, 2005). Attempts at defining language or cultural brokering have been relatively consistent, with many scholars referring to the interpretative and translating qualities of cultural brokers. In her oft-cited article, Tse (1996) defines language brokering as a phenomenon where “interpretation and translation [are] performed in everyday situations by bilinguals who have had no special training” (p.486). Despite the fact that brokers do not have any special training, they nonetheless still perform “sophisticated metalinguistic and cultural transformations in conveying meaning between two or more adults and/or translating text for others” (Weisskirch, 2007, p. 546). Similarly, Bauer (2012) posits that language brokering “is a common phenomenon, whereby children of immigrant parents mediate both verbally and with

written documents between their parents and other different language speakers or writers, converting meanings in one language into meanings in another” (p.205). In this instance, language brokering takes place in and across multiple sites and settings.

The form of interpreting and translating that language brokers perform is significantly different from traditional work of translators and interpreters. As Tse (1995) posits, language brokering involves mediating interaction between different parties and negotiating power.

Language brokers are distinct from formal translators and interpreters in two important respects: first, brokers are usually involved in informal negotiation for one or both of the parties for which they serve as a liaison, mediating communication rather than merely transmitting it; and second, there exists an unequal power relationship between the broker and the agents, usually one in which the broker (a child) is normally under the authority or supervision of one of the beneficiaries.

Weisskirch (2007) makes a similar argument and states that brokering is not merely the transmission of received information but instead involves complex negotiation.

Although the literature has been relative consistent in defining the practice of language brokering, the process of characterizing language brokers has proven to be a far greater challenge. Language brokers begin brokering for their family between the ages of 8 and 12. When gender is accounted for, the research has yet come to a general consensus about the gendered construction of the practice. On the one hand, researchers have argued that language brokering tends to be largely done by females. Weisskirch

(2005), for instance, attributes this trend to the possibility that “girls feel more positively about language brokering because it requires verbal skills, an area where girls frequently excel over boys. Girls, particularly in Latino families, may also be more likely to be chosen as designated language brokers in the family” (p.296). In their review of the literature on language brokering, Morales & Hanson also point out that females are often fluent in both their heritage language and the dominant language, extroverted, confident, and sociable (p.491). On the other hand, studies show no gender difference when it comes to language brokering. For example, Love and Buriel (2007) found no “significance gender differences in language brokering activity” (p.486). A possible explanation, they assert, is that participants, particularly the younger males, were available to serve as brokers. These types of qualities are necessary in order to mediate between two different cultures and languages. At a very young age, language brokers are charged with the responsibility of performing a variety of adult-like tasks, such as reading medical and legal documents and translating and interpreting at places such as a doctor’s office, restaurants, and stores, for which they are not prepared (Weisskirch, 2007).

Traditional Vietnamese Socialization Practices

Within the traditional Vietnamese home, differential power relations exist to maintain strict gender hierarchies. In general, men possess ultimate authority on all matters related to the home, while women hold lower social status and power. Women are expected to be obsequious and dependent on their husbands (Nguyen & Williams, 1989; Matsuoka, 1990; Kibria, 1993). Especially for young female members, their experiences are characterized by subordination, with cultural expectations that they “manifest modesty, obedience, and chastity,” while young Vietnamese men are “expected

to exhibit adult male behavior” (Matsuoka, 1990, p. 342). Although Matsuoka does not ascribe specific gender roles to young men, the cultural expectation is that they model themselves after the patriarchal system that defined their appropriate social standing within the family. These cultural expectations for both males and females arise from a perceived need to maintain social and cultural hegemony in the face of rapidly changing notions of home.

The traditional Vietnamese household is unlike the nuclear family of western cultures. For many Vietnamese, the home includes not only the immediate family but also extended kinships across multiple generations. This experience of home socializes children to practices that emphasize the importance of filial obligation over personal interest and self-fulfillment. Do (1999) explains that the virtue of *hieu*, or filial piety, is taught at a very young age and is reinforced in social institutions (p. 9). As Do states, this virtue “refers to the idea of love, care, and respect that children give to their parents. This obligation is unconditional, even in the case of a parent who abandons the children or does not fulfill his or her parental duties” (p. 9). For children raised by such practices, maintaining strong obligatory ties to home is a display of loyalty to one’s family lineage. This collectivist practice not only defines the traditional Vietnamese home but also the construction of one’s identity. Notions of selfhood, particularly for immigrant youths, find their meaning in the daily interaction with other members of the household. Zhou and Bankston (1998) describe the obligatory ties to kinship that Vietnamese children are expected to observe constitute the core of an individual’s self because “culture dictates that parent-child obligations should be mutual and lifelong” (p.165).

This mutual and lifelong obligation constructs different meanings of family for many Vietnamese children. Examining the family structure of Vietnamese immigrants, Pyke (2000) finds that participants frequently “invoked a monolithic image of the ‘Normal American Family’ as an interpretive framework in giving meaning to their own family life” (p. 240). The ideal family is an ideological construct that carries such traits as sensitivity, openness, communication, autonomy, and forgiveness, qualities that participants equated with White America (Pyke, 2000). In her study, Pyke reveals that Vietnamese immigrants employ this ideological construct of the family as a lens through which they measure their family life, and she finds that they desired that their parents “were less strict and gave them more freedom; were more liberal, more open-minded, more Americanized, and less traditional; were emotionally closer, more communicative, more expressive, and more affectionate” (p. 246). This “Family” ideology exerts a great influence on participants’ understanding, desires, and subjective experience of family life, and it is against this ideological lens that they perceive their family life negatively and constructed their parents as unloving and distant (p. 251).

However, their perception of family and love changes in response to their attitudes about filial piety. Despite their desires for the monolithic image of “Family” life, the participants “positively evaluated their family’s collectivist commitment to care” when discussing their future plans of fulfilling their filial obligations (Pyke, 2000, p. 249). They called upon this ethnic collectivist tradition as a way to construct Asian families more positively in contrast to traditional American families that they perceive as deficient and uncaring (Pyke, 2000). Here, we see two different constructs at work. On the one hand, Vietnamese immigrants invoke the ideal “Family” ideology as a framework

to critique their parents as unloving and emotionally distant. On the other hand, they are equally critical of mainstream American families for their lack of collective responsibility for their elderly and aging parents. For instance, although he was critical of certain cultural practices, Josh speaks of his obligations to support his parents as they age by refusing to put them in a nursing home because “that’s terrible” (Pyke, 2000, p. 249). To fulfill their obligation, participants discussed how they intend to live near their parents and provide them with financial assistance. In the absence of explicit expressions of love, participants viewed their parental caregiving as a way for them to “symbolically demonstrate their affection for their parents and to reaffirm family bonds” (Pyke, 2000, p. 250).

In daily activities, children’s filial obligations to their parents include language brokering. In their study of 147 Vietnamese adolescents and their parents, Trickett and Jones (2007) suggest that brokering is one way in which children of immigrant parents serve the needs of the family household by aiding in the family’s adaptability and survival. Whether they perceived the experience positively or negatively, language brokers seem to understand the gravity of the different situations in which they had to interpret and translate for their family members. Having to language broker for their families was a symbolic gesture of love, while also satisfying an important social function. That language brokers serve such an important role in the household, choosing the child who will fulfill this role becomes crucial.

On Becoming A Language Broker

For language brokers, the responsibility of interpreting and translating begins at a very young age with no formal training and continues throughout their adult lives.

Language brokers are chosen informally, and the choice is often made on the basis of the child's characteristics. As previously mentioned, language brokers are generally outgoing, confident, and sociable. These qualities are especially important for parents and family members who do not speak the dominant language. These qualities are evident in Henry who has served as a language broker for his grandmother. He frequently visits her to ensure that she is properly taken care of. This means that he takes time to have lunch with her so that she continues to have social interaction with people. Most importantly, as Henry stated, "since I speak Vietnamese, I've...I've become like the grandkid who...or nephew who...who caters to the Vietnamese people who don't speak that much English and need them to drive them around." Henry's knowledge of Vietnamese is crucial to his language brokering experience for his family members who are less proficient in English. Because of his language skills, Henry has been entrusted with the responsibility of translating and interpreting for many people. In one particular example, he language broker for his grandmother during a business transaction.

I think the biggest thing for my grandmother and me...we were...her phone broke. So her phone just went out and died. And I took her to the Sprint store and I had to talk to them and speaking English and I had to translate to my grandma. And she had to sign some papers, so I had...I had to read the papers and make sure...and tell her everything is ok. And then not only talk to my grandma, but then my uncle who is like the responsible son trying to take care of my mom, I had to call him and talk to him tell him as well. But that was more English than anything else.

As the "grandkid who [...] caters to the Vietnamese people who don't speak that much

English,” Henry has assumed the responsibility of having to mediate social interactions on behalf of his limited English speaking family members because he is highly sociable and comfortable speaking both languages. Admittedly, although he has struggled speaking Vietnamese in different social situations, such as the doctor, he has not shied away from doing so when it is necessary, especially when his ability to language broker will benefit others. In the excerpt above, Henry adopted his assumed identity as the language broker to negotiate across various languages. He had to interpret the instructions given to him by the Sprint representative and then translate that back into Vietnamese. He did the same for written material. To ensure that his grandmother understood what was requested of her that was verbally expressed and written, Henry translated in both contexts. Henry’s duties as a language broker reflect socialization patterns in Vietnamese culture that obligate children to serve elders. As Do (1999) explains, attending to the needs of parents and grandparents is a display of a child’s *hieu*, or filial piety. Language brokering is one form of expressing *hieu* and continuing traditional Vietnamese practices.

Language brokers have been generally identified as extroverts, and this characteristic is apparent in Jane who, unlike her more passive siblings, described herself as “outgoing.” Jane became a language broker because her older half siblings were no longer living in the home, so, as the next eldest in the household, she was charged with the responsibility of translating and interpreting.

And then growing up as the next oldest, and the one always home with my dad, it was basically thrown on me to do it. And with my little sisters, ummm...my next youngest one, which is...she’s 14 this year? She’s very lazy and she’s very like,

you know, introvert. She doesn't like to be extrovert. And I'm like the outgoing one. So then, you know, with her, [my parents ask] her to translate, she's like "I don't know." and she speaks not as much Vietnamese as I do now. And my youngest little sister, she speaks Vietnamese pretty well compared to my...her older sister. But then, she's too young to do paperwork. And she's 10.

In this excerpt, Jane was chosen to language broker because, much like Henry, she was the one whom the family trusted and who spoke a fair amount of Vietnamese in order to translate in both English and Vietnamese.

While Henry and Jane exhibit extroverted personalities, Kate and Tiffany are far more reserved and less proficient in their HL. Nonetheless, they served as language brokers for their family members because of their filial obligation and respect for elders. For example, Tiffany began translating for her mother when she was 7. She recounted her experience language brokering at Fred Meyer where her mother was discriminated. To spare herself the embarrassment of speaking with English speakers, her mother relied on Tiffany to translate on her behalf.

But umm..yeah...and just like things like that...my mom would always have me translate. From that point on like she's a very like she doesn't like to admit when she needs help but from there on out, she's like 'ok, whenever I need to say something, you're going to say it for me. Like...cause I just don't want to deal with that anymore.'

Similarly, Kate began language brokering at the age of 8 or 9. Her first experience interpreting and translating occurred during her excursions grocery shopping with her grandmother at non-Vietnamese supermarkets by reading labels on boxes or instructing

her how to properly use a credit card.

I did go to like the supermarket or something with my grandma, the [non-Vietnamese] supermarket not in Little Saigon, then she would sometimes take me and when she was trying to communicate with the cashier, sometimes she wouldn't understand like that she had to like take her hand off the...umm...pad for her to sign for her credit card, so I would have to translate that or she would be like what kind of food is this or something like that [chuckles]. Or read something on a box.

Although her Vietnamese language proficiency is limited, she nonetheless worked hard at translating for her grandmother who spoke little English. Kate felt strongly about her role as a language broker because of her desire to contribute to her grandmother's well-being.

These participants became language brokers to fulfill their filial obligation to family members who were not proficient in English. As HL speakers, who at times had difficulties speaking their HL, they were constantly renegotiating their understanding of themselves in relation to the languages that they spoke.

Renegotiating Identities in Language Brokering

Burgeoning research has emerged that investigates the relationship between language brokering and ethnic identity. Wu and Kim (2009) conducted a longitudinal study on Chinese-American adolescents, and their findings suggest that the greater participants' orientation towards their Chinese cultural heritage, the least likely that they will find language brokering to be a burden. However, participants who were less oriented towards their Chinese cultural heritage experienced greater anxiety and

frustration brokering for their family. Tse (1996) also reports that brokering had an impact on how participants viewed themselves. In her report, she discovered that the “subjects reported benefits of increased independence and maturity” (p. 492).

However, language brokering is an interdependent process that requires all members to renegotiate their identities to fulfill a social goal. In this transaction, all members are reflectively and interactively positioning and repositioning. In this regard, the parent-child relationship, and the power dynamics entailed in such a configuration, is momentarily suspended to achieve a goal. Participants’ assumed identities as the community’s unofficial translator were what they accepted but did not contest or negotiate (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004). For instance, Jane was positioned as the family’s language broker and accepted and assumed that identity. In her narrative, she recounted numerous situations wherein she had to negotiate complex interactions between members of her community of practice and the English speaking world. One particular interaction stood out for her. Before Jane entered middle school, her family moved to their current residence in Phoenix, Arizona. At this time, her parents were completing their loan modification, but because of the complex legal jargon, they struggled understanding the loan documents and relied upon Jane to serve as a language broker who mediate their interaction with English speakers.

So, I was always the one, you know, talking to the representatives from the mortgage company and doing the paper work, passing it out, and then I had to ask my mom all about her, you know, her taxes and my dad’s taxes. So then, you know, I’m not familiar, you know, as you’re young, you’re not familiar with tax forms. So I’m like this lady “*cai ba nay*” [this lady] she’s talking about some tax

paper...a W-2? And she's like "I have those. I have those." So I'm like "ok." and then, you know, just...with all of the tax papers, and she's like "is there anything else you need?" I'm like, "Is there anything else you need?" and they're [representative] you just need the W-2s, your I-10, you know, 10-40s." and I'm like, "ok." And then doing all that, and then you mess up once, and she'll yell at you again. So it was just repetitive.

In this instance, Jane mediated between and across different languages and cultures, and to do this rather successfully, she had to negotiate multiple identities simultaneously. For one, she had to adjust to her assumed identity as a language broker, which meant that her parents perceived that she was relatively proficient in both languages to operate as both interpreter and translator. Although she was a proficient English speaker by the time she started language brokering, she was not familiar with tax forms and other complex documents to comprehend, interpret and translate them back to her parents. In addition, her position as a language broker also intersected with her identity as a daughter who was expected to fulfill her filial obligations. During the interview, Jane seemed to have a genuine desire to help as much as she can, but her parents' heavy reliance upon her to make adult decisions at such a young age compounded her stress.

Feelings of Frustration

Researchers have measured the affective responses of child and adolescent language brokers, and results have shown that brokering for friends and families have been a source of stress and frustration because of brokers' inability to effectively communicate across languages. A recent study conducted by Corona, et al. (2012) reveal that participants struggled with language brokering because of their lack of command of

their heritage language. In their study of 25 Latino adolescents, they found that the youths harbored negative feelings when having to translate and interpret in “health-related contexts, when people spoke rapidly, or when they had word-finding difficulties in English and Spanish” (p. 793). In one instance when a youth was expected to translate and interpret in medical situations, she expressed concerns about not fully understanding her doctor’s instructions. As a result, she was very concerned about brokering for her mother in fear that she would wrongly interpret medical instructions that would potentially harm her younger brother. In another but related context, language brokers had difficulties finding English and Spanish words that were comparable, or they did not know the appropriate word to use, or were unfamiliar with words entirely for them to be able to translate and interpret them for their parents.

Participants who language broker for their parents encountered difficulties translating and interpreting texts because not only were they unfamiliar with the complex legal language in English but also incapable of conveying the nuances of meaning in Vietnamese. Weisskirch (2005) posits that language brokering is a stressful process because the “language broker must accurately convey the information, including the nuances of meaning in each language. Early adolescents may lack sufficient vocabulary in either language” (p. 556). For instance, in her effort to language broker for her parents, Jane expressed frustration at being unable to find appropriate words to translate and interpret between English and Vietnamese.

I did most of the paper work, filling out my parents. So then as I’m trying to translate them. Trying to explain “oh...this paper’s for this and this one is for that one, I would like get so confused as like “wait, how do I say this in Vietnamese?

Or how do I say this back in English?”

In this instance, Jane described her “unfamiliarity with some words that sometimes made it difficult for [her] to fully understand what [she was] being asked to translate or for other people to understand [her] translation” (Corona et al., 2012, p. 793). She often found herself at a loss for words and thus had “trouble knowing how to translate an English word/phrase into [Vietnamese] or vice versa” (Corona et al., 2012, p. 793). Jane’s lack of sufficient vocabulary in both languages made it difficult for her to articulate the nuances of meaning that is necessary to make herself communicable to others. Her struggle to find the appropriate words to convey herself in both languages “would [make her]...get so confused.” Her confusion incurred her parents’ anger at her inability to language broker.

Other participants experienced frustration at not being able to comprehend complex materials, which made the translation and interpretation process difficult. For instance, Tiffany encountered a similar experience when language brokering for her mother. When she was child, her parents filed for divorce, and the courts ruled that her mother would be granted full custody of her. During the entire process, her mother needed to complete all of the necessary documents to finalize the divorce, but because she was unable to read and write in English, she relied on Tiffany to language broker.

my parents a lot...like they expect me to be their little translator...Like I’d speak for the family. I would ummm...cause they’d speak it just to be kind of like rough accented and I spoke it better, so they’d always have me do it. And my mom like when she’s like doing like even like legal documents like words I don’t know, she’d be like ‘what’s this? Like and it would be like big words. And I’d be

like ‘I don’t know. I’m. [stutters] I don’t know what that is.’ And she’d be like ‘you speak English. You should know.’ And I’ll be like ‘no...I don’t know. Like I’m not there yet.’

Tiffany’s experience is very common among adolescent language brokers who are often frustrated at having to translate for their parents when the texts they encounter are far more advanced than their heritage language abilities. While Tiffany understood English, she was unable to language broker for her mother because she did not know “what it [paperwork] means like this is like asking me to do your taxes. Like I dunno know anything about this.” She described the texts as being incomprehensible because she encountered she did not understand. Thus, Tiffany expressed very little confidence in her ability to language broker, even though she desired to do so. In this instance, Tiffany’s inability to comprehend complex texts, coupled with her lack of HL proficiency, exacerbated the frustration she felt from the pressure of having to interpret and translate at an age when she felt underprepared to handle the demands of brokering. Language brokers are positioned as the expert who should be able to translate and interpret across languages, and parents’ expectation for their children to accurately interpret and translate complex texts.

Parents’ expectation for accurate interpretation and translation also weighs heavily on child language brokers. Jane’s frustration with language brokering stemmed from her parents’ ill temperament at her inability to quickly respond to their requests. In one incident that Jane recounted, she was attempting to explain different types of paperwork involved, but the more she tried to explain herself, the further confused she became because she realized that she was unable to articulate the nuance of meanings the

paperwork entailed.

I'll just sit there thinking and they'll be like "well, are you going to tell me anything or are you just going to stare?" And they get mad because I didn't know what I was saying. So they're just like you know they get really heated. My parents have...they're really short tempered. So then I just sit there and stare and be like "wait, what am I doing?" and then they'll yell. And then I have to like, shut down and like...and I'm freaking out; I don't know what I'm doing. And then they'll just get really mad and heated and start yelling.

Having to interpret and translate, while trying to meet her parents' expectations, was a heavy burden upon Jane because she genuinely wanted to help them, but the combined stress was so overwhelming that she "shut down" and "freak[ed] out" in response to their constant pressure.

Tiffany, too, began to experience the burden and stress of meeting her parent's expectations of her as a language broker. In particular, she expressed frustration at her mother whom she did not feel was taking the necessary steps to improve her English language skills and, instead, was depending on Tiffany to accomplish all of the tasks of interpreting and translating.

I gotten stage where I got annoyed of it...and I...I feel kinda bad for saying that but I was like 'shouldn't you know by now' like I don't I don't have to always like be here for you. like umm...I just kinda like 'you need to put some effort in, too. I can't always do this for you. Like if you...ummm...want to communicate, like, you have to learn, too. Like if you expect me to speak Vietnamese, you'll have to be willing to learn English, too. Like there's gotta be somewhere we

have...we can meet or something like that.

Tiffany questioned whether her language brokering was helping or enabling her mother to be co-dependent. While she worked at improving her Vietnamese, Tiffany became increasingly frustrated at having to language broker for her, especially since she did not make much attempt to improve her English language skills. Tiffany saw language brokering as a temporary solution to her mother's lack of English language proficiency, but she had anticipated that over time she would not have to perform such a duty. However, as her language brokering became more frequent, she realized that her mother became increasingly dependent. Tiffany sought to resist her mother's co-dependency by expecting her to "be willing to learn English, too," as a means of making the process of interpreting and translating a team effort (Corona et al., 2012, p. 793).

Tiffany's desire that her mother learn English was meant to make language brokering a collaborative effort. Corona et al. (2012) posits that participants viewed language brokering as a "team effort" where both the child and parent helped each other in interpreting, translating, and navigating their social world. In one instance, they reported that a mother and daughter helped each other when the other did not fully comprehend what was being asked to translate (p. 793-794). In Tiffany's situation, she did not enjoy the same type of collaborative effort from her mother, and she sought ways to communicate her desires for a "team effort."

Compounding their frustration is the fact that language brokers often have to organize their lives around their brokering responsibilities. Weisskirch (2013), for instance, identified that "[c]hild language brokers may also feel negatively about [...] having to leave their own activities behind to engage in language brokering or being

placed in a pressured situation where communication must occur quickly and with high stakes” (p. 1147). Participants felt as though language brokering caused them to miss out on their youth and prevented them from participating in activities with their peers. For Jane, language brokering was a strain on her social life, especially during her adolescent years.

back then it [language brokering] was a problem because, you know, you’re growing up, you know, hitting puberty, changing, and your parents are yelling at you to do paperwork. And, then, it was just, you know, really different growing up like that. With my little sisters, they do nothing.

During the interview when she recounted her earlier experiences, her negative feelings toward language brokering is reflected in how she spoke disparagingly about it. At a time when most adolescents are defining themselves and establishing their social network, Jane found having to language broker while going through puberty made it “really different growing up.” That is, Jane was unlike many of her peers who were able to fully enjoy their adolescent years because being positioned as a language broker placed her in adult like situations. Her negative feelings about language brokering were further compounded because she carried the responsibility alone, while her “little sisters [...] do nothing.” In this sense, Jane felt as though she had to sacrifice part of her youth to care for her parents.

For language brokers, feelings of frustration not only stemmed from their inability to translate and interpret across languages but also from the impact language broker had on parent-child relationship. Weisskirch (2007), for instance, examines the emotional responses of Mexican adolescent language brokers, and his findings show that negative

emotional responses, such as anger, embarrassment, anxiety, shame, or frustration, were correlated with difficult family relationships (p. 554). The feelings of frustration were exacerbated when language brokers had pre-existing conflict with their parents. Since Tiffany identified herself more with her father, language brokering for her mother became a “burden.”

We were kinda already on a rough road like she’s very offended that I wanted to be with my dad, instead of her. Ummm...so, when she’d ask me to translate for her, it would feel like more like a burden than a favor. Like, I feel, like, I, like, didn’t really want to but it was something I had to do.

Tiffany’s identity as a language broker intersected with her filial obligation as a daughter. Her negative feelings towards language brokering mirrored the strained relationship she had with her mother whom she did not value as much as she did her father. Despite the feelings she harbored, Tiffany nonetheless felt compelled to fulfill her filial obligations to her mother. Her moral obligation to assist her mother reflects larger cultural practices that emphasize the collective rather than the individual well-being. In Vietnamese cultural tradition, children are expected to uphold the principle of filial piety (Rutledge, 1992). This means that children are to display respect and provide care for one’s parents throughout their lifetime (Rutledge, 1992). In this instance, despite her reservations in helping her mother, she did so anyways because “it was something I had to do.” Tiffany felt compelled to help her because of a deeply ingrained cultural practice that conflicted with her American cultural practices. Rather, the experience of language brokering further complicated their tumultuous relationship.

Similarly, Jane was frustrated at having to language broker because of the undue tension it caused between her and her parents. She described that language brokering “kinda pissed me off” because “there’s people out there that, you know, are professionals at this. And there’s some that speak Vietnamese to you. You can always have them do it.” Because of her struggles to interpret and translate, Jane suggests that her parents relieve her of the responsibility of language brokering. She was “pissed” because the economic incentive of having her language broker far outweighed the emotional stress that it caused her. In her interview, Jane repeatedly mentioned that her parents frequently yelled at her for not being able to translate, and it is the repeated stress from their expectations that created tension between them.

For other participants, however, their positive experiences language brokering made them feel closer to their families. While participants reported increase stress and burden, other brokers claimed more positive results that included an increase sense of maturity and responsibility. Tse (1996) found that brokers who reported feeling burdened or stressed also stated that they gained a sense of independence. Recently, Kate was charged with the responsibility of chauffeuring her grandparents to and from the hospital, and as the language broker who “spoke on their behalf when interfacing with the non-Vietnamese speaking medical staff,” she handled the paperwork and medical directions.

Before the colonoscopy, I received detailed instructions from the staff on the procedures for pre-surgical do's and don'ts (only drink liquids 24hr before but not after 3 hrs before the procedure; take the Ducolax table 48hr before; etc). The medical staff is very particular when it comes to filling out paperwork and which

documents need to be provided. On the morning of the colonoscopy, I filled the paperwork out in some sections for my grandparents since my grandpa was able to do so for my grandma. Since I handled transportation, I handled the instructions for picking her up (like in which location and what time).

The situations in which Kate language broker for her grandparents “brought us closer. There was a dependency on me to get them to the right place on time and to communicate for them. This is reversed in Little Saigon.” As she described, language brokering had a positive impact on their relationship. Kate expressed that she “felt happy because I was doing something that was helping my grandparents. Because they raised me for a good part of my life, I wanted to give back, and this instance was a great opportunity since I think it would have caused them lots of confusion.” For one who has always assumed the passive and subordinate role in the household where others made every decision on her behalf, Kate felt empowered by her responsibility to interpret and translate for her grandparents. She recognized that she relied on them to mediate her interaction with Vietnamese people in Little Saigon, but in social settings that required proficiency in English, Kate recognized her self worth and importance in her family household. She derived her sense of worth by being able to assist her grandparents navigate their social environment, while also fulfilling her filial obligations to them who have raised her throughout most of her childhood.

Like Kate, Henry has taken care of his grandmother and chauffeured her to her doctor’s appointment. Recently, after visiting the doctor, he took her to a restaurant where he language broker for her.

On Monday I had taken her to the doctor's office for a procedure and afterwards we went to Round Table to grab lunch. She now inquired me about the vegan pizza that we ordered on Monday. She asked me what was the pizza called, where do you order it, and are the coupons from the previous pizza applicable for the pizza that she wants to order. All the information she sought was in English. I spent eight to ten minutes answering her questions and translating how she would go about ordering how and what she should do when ordering the pizza.

The daily interaction he has with her has made him feel "like I was being useful to her. She's an older woman and has a hard time learning English let alone speaking it." In the traditional Vietnamese household, filial piety extends beyond parents to include extended family members, such as aunts, uncles, and grandparents (Routledge, 1992). Henry focused on the pragmatic aspect of language brokering, seeing it as a way for other non-English speaking family members to benefit from his ability to negotiate meaning between two different languages.

The experience language brokering varied from each participant. For Jane and Tiffany, who frequently language broker for their parents, they expressed frustration at the experience of brokering, which created tension over time. However, Kate and Henry, who occasionally language broker for their grandparents, had positive experiences and saw themselves as aides to their less proficient English speaking family members. The atypical adult situations in which language brokers find themselves have led to what some scholars see as a "role reversal" or the "adultification" of child language brokers. This role reversal has impacted the power dynamics between the child and adult over

time. However, because many child language brokers see themselves as translators, they view their responsibility as an extension of their filial obligation.

Just Another Responsibility: The Non-Adultification of Language Brokering

The additional burden that brokers felt is a result of having to take on atypical adult responsibilities. The ways brokers are positioned as adults in social interaction has led to a “role reversal,” or what scholars have described as the “adultification” or “parentification” of adolescence (Puig, 2002; Ponizovsky, 2012). Where role reversal or parentification occurs, “the child adopts parental behaviors (e.g., caregiving, support, nurturing) while the parent acts helpless, seeks reassurance, and engages in other dependent behaviors” (Ponizovsky, 2012, p. 987). Puig (2002), for instance, examines the adultification process of Cuban refugee children and discovers that their parents frequently relied upon them to negotiate day-to-day activities usually conducted by adults. In her findings, she shows that parents heavily relied on their children “to help translate, deal with landlords, and manage situations involving school personnel, government officials, and social services providers” (p. 90). In addition to these responsibilities, they were positioned as adults to “pay bills, [deal with] social institutions such as banks and schools, and also did the shopping, particularly if it required going to non-Spanish owned stores” (p. 90). In these instances, when children become “parentalified” or when there is “role reversal,” the power-dynamics between parent and child erodes. However, positioning children as language brokers does not constitute a role reversal. Instead, it is perceived as an extension of their filial responsibilities.

The debate of whether language brokering leads to the “adultification” or “parentification” of adolescence has been challenged by scholars who perceive the

practice as a continuation of children's responsibilities in the household. Trickett and Jones (2007), for instance, view that brokering "is most likely to be an additional family chore that may have deleterious short-term family consequences, but that it does not normatively represent role reversal" (p. 144). In this regard, although children were placed in atypical adult situations that positioned them in more active roles in the decision making process of their homes, the participants were never fully in control of making the final decisions on important matters. For example, when Jane enrolled her mother onto the Affordable Care Act, she was handed a stack of papers that her mother expected her to complete. She recalled having to language broker and fill out paperwork.

[Y]ou know how like the whole medical enrollment is, you know, the season right now? So my mom just brought home a whole bunch of her medical umm...papers. like medical insurance, vision insurance, all of this paper work. And she was just like "here. Fill these out." And I'm just like, "what are you applying for?" and she said, "I want this." She just...there was like a checklist and she said "I want this one, this one and this one."

When language brokering involved important decisions, brokers are not necessarily making them. Instead, parents, in consultation with their child, make a decision based on their understanding of their child's interpretation. In Jane's case, her mother had finalized her decision about her health coverage. What she expected Jane to do is to complete the appropriate forms and consult her if questions or information is needed from her. This could explain why Jane perceived language broker as another responsibility that she had to complete.

Like after you know, so many instances where I had to you know, translate or do something for my parents, it just kind of a daily routine for me to like...even to this day, they'll call me and say "oh...can you call this place for me? And let them know...blah blah blah." So like "ok, what's the number?" and I call, so it's kinda like daily work.

As Jane suggested, her role as a language broker did not indicate a role reversal but rather a continuation of her responsibilities that contributed to her family. Because a traditional Vietnamese household is arranged hierarchically, with children subordinate to their elders, Jane did not assume the position of an adult. Although she was placed in atypical adult situations, she understood her role as a translator who "do[es] something for my parents" and perceives language brokering as "daily work." Jane's description of language brokering as "daily work" confirms studies of "para-phrasers" who view their experience translating for family members as "just normal" (Orellana et al., 2003). Much like participants in Orellana et al's study, Jane language broker so frequently that it has become routinized. She understood the importance of language brokering for her parents, and she has continued to do so as a symbolic gesture of love for them and respect for tradition.

Not only did brokers leverage their ability to language broker to assist their parents in translating difficult material but also combat linguistic discrimination and protect their family members from embarrassment. Morales et al. (2005) point out that language brokers "use their position of power to protect their parents from embarrassment and humiliation. Some of the participants in their studies mentioned that they could not let employers, doctors, or other individuals embarrass their parents or

other family members” (p. 495). During her interview, Tiffany described an experience at the supermarket chain, Fred Meyer. On this particular day, her mother asked a cashier about a product she needed in a specific color. Not understanding what she was saying, the cashier rudely dismissed her request.

We went to...[thinking to self]. We went to I think umm...like the Fry's over there. It's called Fred Meyer. So we would always go there. And she needed to ask like about a certain item like. She knew how to ask like how much things were and stuff. But she needed it in another color. And she's trying to tell that to the woman, and the woman was like 'I don't understand what you're saying.' And she's being really rude about it. And then my mom like she's a very humble woman. But then like this woman is being so rude to her like she finally got to a point where she's like 'umm...translate for me. [Tell] her this is what I need.' And so then I told her. And then she saw that umm...she finally understand what we're trying to say and, like, she apologized and she's like a lot more understanding after that, but like bore that like she was really rude and she's like not as understanding about like the fact that my mom can't speak the language.

In this instance, the cashier positioned Tiffany's mother as an immigrant who lacks the ability to speak English proficiently to be understood. Her rudeness further distanced herself from Tiffany's mother as a means of displaying her unwillingness to help. In response, she stopped speaking and asked Tiffany to interpret and translate on her behalf. Tiffany, in turn, leveraged her ability to language broker to protect and shield her mother from the cashier's rudeness and to point out that the cashier was being discriminatory (Morales 2005).

Although they were placed in atypical adult situations, these language brokers did not assume the responsibility of making important decisions on behalf of their parents. They viewed themselves as translators who helped their family members. While they translate to help benefit their families, they, too, benefited from language brokering. Participants discussed how interpreting and translating helped them improve their heritage language proficiency.

Conclusion

Language brokering has long been an important practice in the lives of many immigrant families who rely upon their children to mediate social interaction and translate important documents. As children of immigrant parents quickly adapt to the dominant culture and language, they take on more responsibility to ensure that their parents are able to successfully navigate their social world. While some language brokers' experiences were marked by stress and frustration, which impacted their relationship with their families, others perceived brokering positively, seeing it as a way to contribute to the normal functioning of their families. Perhaps the different emotional responses to language brokering can be attributed to the frequency that participants broker. Jane and Tiffany, for instance, language broker heavily for their parents, while Henry and Kate did so occasionally. What the research findings suggest is a "middle-of-the-road" position with respect to brokers' emotional response to language and cultural brokering. Despite the different emotional responses to language brokering, they did not feel as though the roles between parent and child were reversed, no matter how dependent the parent may have been. Most participants suggest that their role as language and cultural brokers was a duty they had to fulfill. They never perceived their

role as language brokers as a role reversal because the ways in which they are socialized in the home positioned them in a subordinate position with respect to their elders.

CHAPTER 5

“OH!!! YOU’RE ASIAN!!!” STANDARD ENGLISH AS MICROAGGRESSION

Recognizing the need for a more inclusive space for a linguistically diverse student population, scholars in rhetoric and composition have sought to resist the ideology of Standard English that underlie English Only policy. Part of the resistance stems from the need to recognize that such policy “run[s] counter to the spirit of cultural, linguistic, and human diversity and reveal a preference for a certain type of “naturalization of immigrants” (Richardson, 2010, p. 97). Challenging Standard English and English Only, scholars have argued for the inclusion of students’ heritage languages. In doing so, this approach begins from a different premise that sees language differences in the composition classroom as the default (Matsuda, 2010). While this pedagogical practice is intended to affirm students’ languages and cultural identities, it does not adequately address the identity needs of the diverse population of heritage speakers who, growing up in a multilingual environment, have, at best, limited language proficiency in their heritage languages or, at worst, lost the ability to speak them entirely (Benmamoun, Montrul, & Polinsky, 2013). Thus, encouraging students’ use of their HL may present problems for many heritage speakers who negotiate multiple and often contradictory identities to navigate the multiple spheres of their lives. This is especially true for U.S. heritage speakers who mainly speak the dominant language, but because they do not fit the physical profile of a native English speaker (i.e. white), they experience racial microaggression that mark them as foreigners who are unable to speak Standard English. In this chapter, I explore how the ideology of Standard English is used in acts of racial microaggressions that index Asian ethnics’ identities as foreigners. To understand the

way the ideology of Standard English in racial microaggression indexes the identities of heritage speakers, rhetoric and composition scholars must reframe the discussion to examine it from the experiences of the language user.

An Exceptional English Speaker: A Focus on Racialized Identities

For all of the arguments that have been advanced about the impact of Standard English and English Only Policies at the institutional level, few scholars in rhetoric and composition have explored how the ideology of Standard English operates at the level of communicative interaction. The impact of Standard English ideology is especially damaging to Asian ethnics who are largely perceived as foreigners. In her research, Tuan (1998) explores how Asian Americans negotiate their ethnic identities to exercise “choice regarding the ethnic practices and values they wish to integrate or discard,” and she compares their ethnic identity options to that of white ethnics. For white ethnics, transmitting cultural knowledge and values is optional. When they do assert their ethnic identity, it is often takes on a “superficial function [...] to be taken up in one’s free time” (p. 26-27). Although Tuan argues that these ethnic identity options are available to her Asian American participants, she points out that it is only in their personal lives that they can exercise such discretion. However, in public spaces, Asian Americans are not afforded such option because “others continue to define them in racialized or ethnic terms” (p. 18). For this reason, Asians are continually perceived with suspicion because of their race, or what Tuan calls an “assumption of foreignness” (p. 18).

The assumption of Asian ethnics’ foreignness is expressed in positive stereotypes that, while seemingly innocuous and “positive,” have the damaging effect of perpetuating negative stereotypes of racial and ethnic groups. Tran and Lee (2014) coin the term

exceptionalizing stereotype to describe the forms of “microaggressions in which a commentary or behavior can arguably be framed as interpersonally complimentary but communicates and perpetuates negative stereotypical views of a racial/ethnic group” (p. 484). Specifically, they examine how Asian respondents reacted to exceptionalizing stereotypes by their interlocutors who comment on their ability to speak English. To examine the impact of exceptionalizing stereotypes, Tran and Lee measure Asian respondents’ reaction to low and high racially loaded statements. Statements such as “You speak English well” was measured as low racial loading, whereas comments such as “You speak English well for an Asian” was regarded as racially loaded. Their study reveals that Asian respondents did not evaluate their interaction with their interlocutors negatively to low racially loaded statements because of their ambiguity. Nonetheless, further analysis suggests that respondents did not want to continue their interaction in the future. Not surprisingly, respondents felt that high racially loaded statements impacted their interaction with their interlocutors, and they expressed little desire to further their interaction in the future.

This exceptionalizing stereotype is predicated on whites’ perceived match of Asian ethnics’ English language proficiency to Standard English. According to Mao (2010), the “Standard English ideology sees only one variety of language—which is always privileged and prescribed—as correct, as not susceptible to the whims of time or the influence of individual users, and as ‘accent-free’” (p. 190). This ideology, furthermore, presumes that Standard English is most efficacious for communication, and it calls upon minoritized individuals to abandon their heritage language for Standard English (Mao, 2010). It is upon this ideology of standards that those who are not

perceived as native speakers are measured.

The feelings of assumed foreignness because of exceptionalizing stereotypes is most clearly seen in Henry's narrative. Before transferring to a local university, Henry attended a community college near his home. To ensure that he had completed all of his prerequisites to transfer, he met with an academic counselor to go over his courses. He recounted his experience speaking to this academic counselor who had made a high racially loaded statement about his native-like English proficiency.

I remember talking to a retired counselor now at West College and he was turned around, and I started talking to him and I'm like "yeah, I need help with counseling. This and this." And he turns around and he goes "Oh!!!! You're Asian!!!! The way you speak English I would not have thought you're Asian. Man, you Asian people are learning English really well. My kids, bringing home some Asian friends, I can't even tell if they were on the phone if they were white or they're Asian." Ummm...I...first thing I was like, "man, you are racist. You, whatever man. You just help me get out of West and I...I...I will not care any less." I mean, as a minority, you...being Vietnamese, we maybe have a plus 1 on social capital, but we still have to deal with a lot of crap. And...and it sucks. Or like, it just feels they're...it's us against them, and it's not fair to say it that way. But it's just how it's set up, and...and...at a young age, I realized that I'm not white. I'm Vietnamese, and I'm living in their world. And if I want to get through their world, I'm gonna have to make some sacrifices, but I'm [stutters] still try to get mine. It was really just kinda...kinda not very...a good feeling once you've learned that.

The connections between language and identity play out in important ways in this excerpt. The counselor's microaggressive comments exemplify highly loaded "racial slights [that] imply foreignness and devaluation of one's American status but can be justified as a well-intentioned statement of interest in the Asian American individual's cultural background" (Tran & Lee, 2014, p. 485). In this instance, the counselor's backhanded compliments, which is an extension of the Asian model minority stereotype, express a positive view of the individual but simultaneously maintain a negative view of his or her racial/ethnic group" (Tran & Lee, 2014, p. 484). These microaggressive statements that can be justified as compliments suggest that Henry is an "exception to an otherwise inferior racial/ethnic group" (Tran & Lee, 2014, p. 484).

Often, participants experience feelings of foreignness because of differential treatment by others who continue to define their language proficiency in racialized or ethnic terms. The ideology of Standard English in the form of racial microaggression privileges one language dialect that is supposedly correct and accent free. The counselor expressed shock and amazement that Henry is Asian because his English language proficiency was that of a person who has mastered Standard English (read: white). Not surprisingly, the counselor remarks that "[m]y kids, bringing home some Asian friends, I can't even tell if they were on the phone if they were white or they're Asian." His statement is an example of an exceptionalizing stereotype because, while he offered Henry a backhand compliment that he construed as "well-intended," he also racialized the English language patterns of Asian ethnics in general as deviating from the standard.

The racist undertone of this exceptionalizing stereotype was clear to Henry, and he responded in kind by stating that "you are racist." Henry's response to the counselor's

racists remarks corroborates Tuan and Lee's study that high racially loaded statements, such as "you speak English well for an Asian," leads participants to rate their interaction, the interlocutor, and future interaction less favorably (p. 484). Henry was quick to end his interaction with the counselor. While he acknowledged the racist remark, Henry felt powerless to do much because he recognized that he "isn't white" and that Asians in general, and Vietnamese in particular, "still have to deal with a lot of crap."

Tiffany had experienced forms of racial microaggression that positioned her as a foreigner. During sorority rush week on campus, Tiffany noticed that white sororities only sought out other potential white female members.

I was coming out of the union one day and it was like a day when all of the [...] clubs were out there like and rush and...I think it was like a sorority and she was like handing out stuff and I walked by and she wasn't gonna give me one. And I was kinda offended. I was like, "Why didn't you offer me one?" so I asked her about it. She was like, "Oh...I didn't even know you spoke English." And I was like, "excuse me?" she was like, "Yeah...you didn't look like you English." And I was like, "What? My hair is blonde, I can speak English. Like." and then umm...I don't know. I was really offended. I was like. I think that was the only time I got like super offended from that. She's like, "umm...I don't know. Like the ignorance, you know? Like you're just, like, "are you really that like...do you not think like people can be born here that aren't white. Like I don't know...and she kinda had like a southern accent, too, so umm...I don't know. That was a factor, I guess. Like where she grew up maybe like the population of where she grew up. So she's like taken back she started giving me info about it.

And I was like, “I’m not interested. Thank you.” and then I walked away.

For Asian ethnics like Henry and Tiffany, they are often perceived as foreigners by virtue of their Asian features, and it is this perception of their foreignness that calls into question their English language proficiency. After being ignored, Tiffany decided to confront the young sorority and question why she did not hand her a goodie bag. In response, the young sorority positioned Tiffany as a foreigner whom she assumed “didn’t even know [...] English.” In response, Tiffany reacted angrily by positioning her interlocutor as a racist. Because of the offensiveness of such a highly loaded racial statement, Tiffany, much like Henry, rated her interaction and this woman negatively, and Tiffany did not seek to further her interaction with her in the future.

Language Differences in Rhet/Comp

Scholars in rhetoric and composition have responded to Standard English policies that underlie traditional writing instruction in the United States. One of the earliest and most invisible efforts to recognize language difference occurred in 1974 when the Conference on College Composition and Communication issued the *Student’s Right to Their Own Language*. The adoption of this resolution marked an important step in acknowledging students’ linguistic diversity, and it sought to answer the question: “what should the schools do about the language habits of students who come from a wide variety of social, economic, and cultural backgrounds?” The resolution had broad implications for writing instruction by disabusing people of the idea that speakers of variant dialects of English have deficient intellectual capabilities that need to be remediated (Bizzell, vii). Although the resolution was a milestone in challenging Standard English in the composition classroom, teacher-scholars were left with very few

clues that would explain how a pedagogy, based on the tenets of the resolution, would be enacted.

Since then, scholars have sought to conceptualize ways of enacting pedagogy practices that reflect the varied dialects and languages that students bring to the classroom. In her work on hybrid academic writing, Bizzell (1999) explores hybrid discourses as an emerging trend in composition studies that blend “[p]reviously non-academic discourses [...] with traditional academic discourses [...] that allow] their practitioners to do intellectual work in ways they could not if confined to traditional academic discourse” (p. 11-12). To provide context for her discussion about hybrid discourses, Bizzell explains traditional academic discourses upon which hybrid discourses are built (p. 9). Traditionally, academic discourse is the “discourse of a community.” Although not citing Lave and Wenger and Wenger, Bizzell, nonetheless invokes a community of practice definition to describe the ways in which community members share “conventions of language use [that] affect social status, world view, and work” (p. 9).

Specifically, these conventions of traditional academic discourses entail the use of traditional academic grapholect; are shaped by academic genres; and communicate a way or perceiving and being in the world, a world in which Bizzell sees as white, upper class (p. 10). However, hybrid academic discourses challenge traditional academic discourses by departing from its ultra correct form of its grapholect and infusing the writing with cultural references. To illustrate her point of hybrid academic discourse, Bizzell analyzes Villanueva’s *Bootstraps* as an example of hybridized discourses she seeks to illustrate. In *Bootstraps*, Bizzell sees Villanueva accomplishing the task of producing academic work

by blending home discourses with traditional academic discourses. That is, Villanueva uses cultural references, offhand refutation, and humor—all of which are uncommon in traditional academic discourse. By calling attention to hybrid academic discourses, Bizzell not only calls into question the perception of academic discourse as unchanging but also to the development of hybrid discourses (p. 20).

The notion of hybrid discourses is not without criticism, however. She goes on to problematize the term, following Bahri, that it is both too abstract and too concrete. On the one hand, the term is too abstract. On the other hand, Bizzell (2000) acknowledges that the term “hybrid,” which is a biological metaphor, is too concrete and “risks essentializing people's language use, as if to imply that, for example, the linguistic features of Black English Vernacular are genetically programmed into all people of African descent” (p. 8). Because of the problems associated with the term, Bizzell modifies her position and adopts instead the idea of mixed discourses. In opting for this latter term, she essentially makes the same argument that calls into question the relatively fixed notions of academic discourse and promotes alternative ways of writing that reflect students’ home languages.

While the term hybrid in the context of the composition course may be seen as problematic, its use is still an important framework that legitimatizes hybrid discourses as a concept having important pedagogical implications. Departing from Bizzell, Hebb (2002) draws on Bakhtin’s notion of heteroglossia and argues that traditional conception of hybrid academic discourses creates a dichotomy between academic and nonacademic discourses. What this dichotomy amounts to is a static definition of language that does not reflect language in use, particularly as the number of non-native English speakers

continues to increase. She reframes this dualistic perspective by positioning both discourses along a continuum. In doing so, she shifts the focus about teaching second language and underprepared writers to proximate Edited American English used in traditional academic discourse to an appreciation of the hybrid nature of language users. Hebb connects language and identity and posits that “the inseparable mixing of oneself and the other(s) operates hazily along a continuum of consciousness and empowerment, the positioning of the subject ever moving back and forth as one reveals and takes control over more and less of the true self” (p. 23). This notion is particularly important for heritage speakers who negotiate multiple identities.

Following Bizzell, scholars have innovatively enacted pedagogical practices that enabled students to explore the use of their home language and dialect in academic contexts. McCrary (2005) is troubled by how the academy pushes Standard or Edited American English at the expense of students’ home languages. Although he recognizes the importance of traditional academic writing, McCrary makes the case for hybrid discourses in the academy. He argues that students “should be given the opportunity to express meanings in a language that is representational of their linguistic knowledge and complexity” because the languages and dialects they use “served them very well in negotiating the often difficult public and private terrains of their lives” (p. 73-74). Here, McCrary points out that students’ lives and cultural identities are intimately connected to the languages they use, and in order to honor them, the academy must seriously take other language and dialects seriously or we, as compositionists, run the risk of just “bootleg[ging] multiculturalists” (p. 75).

Villanueva (1997) examines the notion of multiculturalism with respect to its impact on literacy, and he argues that [w]hen we demand a certain language, a certain dialect, and a certain rhetorical manner in using that dialect and language, we seem to be working counter to the cultural multiplicity we seek” (p. 183). In other words, the type of literacy practices, rooted in U.S. colonialism, we teach to students of color not only reinforces a narrow conception of literacy but also further their subjugation. To this end, Villanueva calls upon teacher-scholars to consider the type of literacy practices we teach.

I want us to complicate our thinking about multiculturalism. I want us to consider the multicultural in terms of its effects on literacy practices, literacy as the teaching of reading and writing and rhetoric (recalling Pattison's definition). I want us to consider the possibility that a colonial sensibility remains for us in the United States-in America-and that America's people of color are most affected by that sensibility. I want us to consider the possibility that traditional ways of teaching literacy have not only forced particular languages and dialects upon America's people of color, but have forced particular ways with language-rhetorical patterns-patterns that help to maintain American racial, ethnic, and cultural stratification, as well as gender and class (p. 184).

Villanueva finds the literacy practices we teach inseparable to issues such as race, class, and gender, While he does not claim to offer a one-size-fits all situation, which does not exist given the complexity of the situation, Villanueva, nonetheless, evokes Freirean's notion of critical consciousness as a means to address the problem he sees plaguing the teaching of literate practices.

Rhet/Comp and the Translingual Turn

The number of international, resident U.S., and U.S. born multilingual students entering U.S. colleges and universities, mainstream composition courses has become peopled with diverse students who speak different languages, as well as varied dialects of English. The presence of multilingual students in our composition courses contests the myth that there exists an unadulterated form of Standard English dialect unaffected by everyday users of language. Yet, despite these changes, our composition courses continue to function as what Paul K. Matsuda (2010) calls sites of “linguistic containment” that render “language differences invisible” and perpetuate “the myth of linguistic homogeneity—the tacit and widespread acceptance of the dominant image of composition students as native speakers of a privileged variety of English” (p. 82-85). As Matsuda points out, the origins of this myth have been perpetuated by various institutional initiatives that attempt to contain forms of language differences by relegating them to remedial courses where they are quarantined. By relegating multilingual students to classes outside the required composition course, U.S. College composition already assumes the policy of “English Only.”

In order to combat the tacit English only policy in composition classrooms, composition scholars are issuing a call to teachers to re-envision language as a living entity, one that changes according to the rhetorical context. Min-Zhan Lu (2010), for example, advocates for an understanding of language not as static but as in constant change to reflect the lived realities of its users. As Lu and other composition scholars are recognizing, composition’s tacit English Only policy reifies Standard English dialect as the dominant norm while ignoring the ways language is used and adopted by multilingual

students. Maintaining an English Only policy is not viable, and scholars are urging us to re-envision the classroom to reflect the changing demographics. What scholars are now calling for is a conceptualization of writing that includes the dialects and voices of those marginalized by “English Only.” What this means is that space is being craved out for multilingual writers in the composition classroom.

More recently, scholars have proposed a translingual turn in composition studies to reflect students’ cultural and linguistic diversity. Horner and Trimbur (2002), for instance, trace the tacit policy of English Only in U.S. composition courses and call for an “internationalist perspective on written English in relations to other languages” (p. 594). This internationalist perspective recognizes that language users have always been multilingual rather than monolingual. Despite composition scholars’ recognition of speakers’ linguistic fluidity, our composition courses continue to function as what Paul K. Matsuda (2010) calls sites of “linguistic containment” that render “language differences invisible” and perpetuate “the myth of linguistic homogeneity—the tacit and widespread acceptance of the dominant image of composition students as native speakers of a privileged variety of English” (p. 82-85). To resist “linguistic containment,” rhetoric and composition scholars propose new approaches to teaching composition that acknowledge “the linguistic heterogeneity of all users of language both within the United States and globally” (Horner et al., p. 305). Evidence of this paradigm shift towards a more linguistically inclusive approach for language differences and dialectal variation is emerging within and across many disciplines, and in composition studies, in particular, teacher-scholars recommend using students’ home languages as linguistic resources upon

which students can draw to validate their communicative practices, epistemologies, and linguistic and cultural identities.

In response to calls for greater sensitivity to students' native languages, scholars in rhetoric and composition are challenged to re-think and develop pedagogical practices that honor students' home languages and reaffirm their linguistic and cultural identities (Bizzell 2000; 2002; McCrary 2005; Carey Richardson 2010; Nero 2010; Bean et al., 2011). For instance, Bean et al (2011) point out that an increasing number of students enter the composition classroom with a "mother tongue," and they seek ways to "validate language minority students' languages and identities" (p. 231). They suggest an open invitation for student-writers to use their home language, which would allow them to write from a position of strength and authority (p. 232). Their invitation is meant to foster a culture of respect for students' home language, while improving their linguistic competence. They argue that using students' home languages is most appropriate in contexts where the goal of the assignment is not to produce a product but rather to help students generate ideas. Opportunities for writing in a home language are best realized during the pre-writing and drafting stages or for narrative essays.

Conclusion

Thus far, the field of rhetoric and composition has explored the impact of Standard English and English Only policies at the macro level, looking at the social, political, economic, and institutional impact of such policies on language users. But, as this study shows, the policy of Standard English in the form of racial microaggression impacts HL speakers in ways that often go invisible to scholars in the field whose focus is the academic institution. What happens outside the academic institution is reflected in

students' attitude about language, about their identities, and about writing in a language of which they may not claim ownership. If we are, as Michelle Hall Kells argues, help students "articulate their multiple spheres of belonging," research and teaching should reflect the experiences of language users and how they negotiate their multiple spheres of belonging when faced with racial microaggression that seeks to deny their citizenship.

Closing Remarks

The identities of HL speakers are far more complex than what current research in the field suggests. Unlike the socio-psychological paradigm that correlates language proficiency with ethnic identity, this study reveals that HL speakers constantly negotiate and construct multiple identities in various social contexts. Because these heritage speakers were not proficient in their heritage language, they were discriminated, and their identities were de-legitimized by targeted language speakers. However, despite the discriminatory contexts in which they found themselves in, these heritage speakers continued investing in their HL learning because it intersected with the multiple identities they construct. In other words, the discriminatory language learning context did not hinder them from practicing their HL because they needed it to fulfill the various identities that they assumed as sons, daughters, and caregivers for family members who did not speak English. Thus, their HL learning was essential for their role as language brokers.

Also, the lack of HL proficiency did not necessarily determine their relationship with members from different communities of practice. These participants imagined themselves as part of a Vietnamese community that transcended both time and space. However, when attempting to engage with other Vietnamese outside their communities of

practice, they were rejected and positioned as non-participating members of the communities they sought membership. These participants resisted such rejection by refusing to participate.

This research on HL identities has implications not only the field of heritage languages but also rhetoric and composition. Recent pedagogical approaches in rhetoric and composition acknowledge students' multiple ways of being in the world, and scholars have advocated for students' right to use their heritage language as a means of expressing their cultural identity. These approaches, although well meaning in their design, present serious complications for heritage speakers in the US who were raised speaking another language other than English and then shifted to the dominant language. As I argue, inviting students to bring their heritage language when composing in a composition course does little to consider the identities of heritage speakers who may no longer identify with their heritage language because they may not be able to speak it. Thus, considering the multiple and negotiated identities of heritage speakers is important when designing curriculum centered on recognizing student's multiple spheres of belonging. By focusing first on the complex and complicated identities of our students, in particular our heritage language students, we are better equipped at understanding how they shape and are shaped by the languages of their home.

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