

Parents' Perceptions and Management of Children's Learning of Chinese as a Heritage Language: A Case Study of Cross-cultural Families in Australia

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Abstract—Parents play an important role in children's learning of their heritage language (HL) in immigrant countries. Fostering HL learning is a hard task for parents, particularly in immigrant families, and this difficulty is exacerbated in cross-cultural families. The existing studies have not fully addressed the importance of consistent parental perceptions and language management in children's HL learning. This gap is particularly clear in the research concerning learning Chinese as an HL among cross-cultural families' children living in English-speaking immigrant countries such as Australia. The present qualitative study used semi-structured interviews to fill this gap by examining the perceptions and language management strategies of three cross-cultural families in Australia whose children are learning Chinese as one parent's HL. The results suggest that, in English countries, Chinese-background and non-Chinese-background parents in cross-cultural families have quite different opinions about their children learning Chinese, which are reflected in their dissimilar language management strategies. The results highlight the importance and challenges of developing a stable family language policy in cross-cultural families in order to maintain their children's HL learning.

Index Terms—heritage language, family language policy, cross-cultural family, children's Chinese learning, parents' perceptions and language management

I. INTRODUCTION

For more than a decade, researchers have acknowledged that heritage language (HL) maintenance is based on intergenerational transmission guided by family language policies (FLPs) (Fishman, 2001), which emphasise the role of parental language ideology, management and practice (Spolsky, 2004). Empirical studies of children's language development have also found evidence of parents' important role and, in particular, parental perceptions and management's essential contribution to children's HL skills and proficiency (Budiyana, 2017; Kalayci & Öz, 2018; Rowe, Ramani, & Pomerantz, 2016). To date, the existing knowledge about parents' perceptions of children's HL maintenance mainly comes from studies of parents who share the same HL background (Hashimoto & Lee, 2011; Li, 2006; Suarez, 2002) or one parent's perceptions (Brown, 2011; Lee, 2013; Liao & Larke, 2008; S. M. Park & Sarkar, 2007; Vu & Yeh, 2017). Nonetheless, researchers also widely acknowledge that both parents' ideas contribute to developing a stable FLP (Fernandes, 2019; Kennedy & Romo, 2013).

Prior studies have rarely explored each parent's perceptions of HL learning in cross-cultural families, and these studies have been largely confined to Spanish, Japanese and Korean as an HL in English-speaking countries e.g., (King & Fogle, 2006; Seo, 2017; Tsushima & Guardado, 2019). Scant research exists on both parents' perceptions in cross-cultural families of maintaining Chinese as an HL in these countries, including Australia. Thus, the present study sought to fill this gap by exploring how each parent from cross-cultural families in Australia perceives Chinese HL maintenance and how they are able to support their children's HL learning.

About 4% of Australia's resident population claim they speak a type of Chinese at home (ABS, 2016). Chinese Australians were among the fastest-growing minority groups in the country, and Chinese was recently ranked the second most frequently spoken home language in Victoria, after English. Chinese as an HL is strongly promoted by families and local communities. Australian Chinese immigrant parents tend to use Chinese as their family language and try to speak Chinese to their children at home instead of English (Shen & Jiang, 2017), as well as sending their children to learn Chinese at weekend community schools. These families' efforts are supported by government policies and funds, with 28 accredited Chinese community language schools in Victoria alone in 2019 (see <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/>) and 12,718 new students enrolled in 2017 (Hughson, Hajek, & Slaughter, 2018). These schools act as platforms that allow children to learn both Chinese and the diverse cultures associated with this

language.

By conducting the current research, we aimed to extend the existing knowledge about HL maintenance specifically through an investigation of how cross-cultural parents maintain Chinese as an HL in an English-speaking immigrant country. This study addressed the following research questions:

1. Do Chinese and non-Chinese parents perceive their children's learning of Chinese differently?
2. How do Chinese and non-Chinese parents manage their children's learning of Chinese?
 - a) What strategies do parents adopt to facilitate their children's Chinese learning?
 - b) What challenges do parents encounter when supporting their children's Chinese language learning?

II. FLPs AND PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS AND MANAGEMENT OF CHILDREN'S HL MAINTENANCE

HL maintenance refers to efforts made by immigrants with cultural and emotional connections to languages other than their immigrant countries' mainstream language in order to preserve their HL (Kelleher, 2010). Studies have highlighted that the family is the most essential source of HL maintenance and that this unit plays a vital role in developing children's wellbeing, education and language skills and proficiency (Fillmore, 2000; Place & Hoff, 2011). As the family's foundation, parents are the first promoters of and most influential individuals in children's healthy growth and educational development, including HL maintenance (Budiyana, 2017).

On the one hand, parents are the primary decision makers in the family regarding children's language development (Hoff, 2018), and these adults take on the greatest responsibility for maintaining and developing HLs (S. M. Park & Sarkar, 2007). On the other hand, successful HL maintenance is largely dependent on family relationships so that, the closer the connections are between parents and children, the more likely the latter are to be willing to maintain their parents' mother tongue (Tannenbaum & Howie, 2002). Fillmore (2000) carried out a qualitative study of a Chinese immigrant family in which language shift had an extremely negative effect on the family relationship. The cited author concluded that, in order to maintain their HL, families and parents as the most crucial agents of HL development must provide basic elements such as a sense of belonging to the home country's culture and of strong identity for the children.

FLPs are a deliberate attempt to foster specific language usage patterns and literacy practices within families based on a plan for language use among family members (Curdt-Christiansen, 2009). According to Spolsky (2004), FLPs are influenced by the family's internal environment (i.e. language ideology, management and practice) and the social external environment (i.e. sociolinguistic, sociocultural, socioeconomic and sociopolitical context). Parental perceptions of children's HL learning shape how parents manage and use that language with their children every day, which, in turn, provides a useful perspective on and insights into the extent to which the FLP is developed (Curdt-Christiansen, 2018). However, these internal elements appear to function like a semi-permeable membrane, allowing external forces (e.g. sociolinguistic and sociocultural) to penetrate the family through language socialisation.

FLPs are considered to be an important aspect of children's language development (Spolsky, 2004) because these plans can generate interactions between children and family members and ultimately determine the framework for how children's language learning develops (Kang, 2015; Kaveh, 2018). More importantly, FLPs lay the foundation for children's HL maintenance and guide parents' efforts to manage and practice the HL with their offspring. These findings are also true for cross-cultural marriage families that may consider bilingualism or multilingualism a crucial child-rearing goal.

To maintain an HL, parents must achieve a balance in their use of different languages in bilingual families and create a consistent FLP (Curdt-Christiansen, 2018; Fogle & King, 2013) with regard to one parent's HL. In practice, parents from different cultures may, however, have dissimilar perceptions of the relevant parent's HL. These intercultural families may also have to contend with different languages in their daily lives because cultural differences in beliefs and practices can create conflicts over parenting and other issues (Dumanig, David, & Shanmuganathan, 2013).

For example, a study in Canada (Tsushima & Guardado, 2019) investigated the most crucial factors influencing HL maintenance among children of Japanese women who had at least one child with a non-Japanese partner whose mother tongue was not Japanese. The results reveal that all the participating mothers voiced their support of developing and maintaining Japanese at home, even in families in which maintaining Japanese as an HL had ultimately been abandoned due to the absence of a consistent FLP in the family. Most Japanese mothers in the study clearly expressed their views of their children's HL development, but they had to change their actual practices because of their partners and society's differing ideas. Tsushima and Guardado (2019) also confirm that, in cross-cultural families, Japanese mothers experience various feelings of guilt, frustration and anxiety about promoting their children's development of Japanese as an HL in Montreal, a multi-ethnic and multilingual city. The cited authors point out that, in cross-cultural families, determining how to transmit one parent's mother tongue to the next generation is a quite high-risk task, particularly for mothers who have to ignore pressures from their spouse and mainstream languages in the society. M. Y. Park (2019) discusses similar challenges faced by Southeast Asian mothers regarding maintaining their HL in cross-cultural families in Korea. All participating mothers in the study perceived the HL as something valuable that they should pass on to their children by making a special effort and adopting language strategies. However, due to different cultural values, the mother's HL was not fully welcomed by Korean family members who felt that learning the HL could hinder the children's academic achievement and future career. As a result, most of these mothers were forced to change to using the mainstream language with their children, who were thus prevented from receiving enriching HL input and who

lacked fluency in their mothers' HL. Given the coexistence of two or more HLs and cultures in cross-cultural and bilingual families, these parents have more difficulty developing a shared perception of their children's HL maintenance than in families in which the adults share a common mother tongue (Blum-Kulka, 2008; Tsushima & Guardado, 2019).

Cultural background (Killian, 2002) or sociocultural factors (Spolsky, 2004) are a crucial influence on parents' perceptions in cross-cultural marriages of their children's HL learning. Culture impacts all aspects of human development, so culture is also manifested in parents' views about their children's language choice and development (Rosenblatt & Stewart, 2004). Each culture has its own social values, traditions, customs, languages, ways of communicating and family values, which can shape individuals' perceptions and opinions of the outside world (Xue & Lu, 2018). King and Fogle (2006) report that the most powerful influence on parents' language policy decisions is their cultural background, personal beliefs and experiences. Thus, in cross-cultural families, parents with different cultural backgrounds tend more towards having different ideas about educational concepts and methods affecting their children, which, in turn, impact their offspring's educational achievement and wellbeing. Studies have shown that, if both parents in a cross-cultural family maintain positive perceptions of their children's HL learning, this consensus is not only conducive to a stable, effective FLP but also benefits these children's development in terms of level and proficiency (Fernandes, 2019; Kennedy & Romo, 2013). For instance, a study conducted in the United States by Kennedy and Romo (2013) showed that one child had successfully maintained Spanish as an HL in a linguistically mixed family in which the mother was an American and the father was Colombian. The cited research confirmed that both parents had a consistently positive attitude towards their child's maintenance of Spanish. Meanwhile, both parents actively sought to ensure an effective FLP that focused on presenting, promoting and maintaining the father's HL in the home.

Although parents come from different cultures in cross-cultural families, parents' perceptions of the HL and language management can promote significant connections to the relevant parent's mother tongue and culture. Kennedy and Romo (2013) propose, therefore, that, to support children's HL maintenance in American society, parents of intercultural families need to reach an understanding and agree with each other on the benefits of raising bilingual children and maintaining HL. In addition, Fernandes (2019) found quite similar results for a child in a Russian-Swedish family that quite effectively maintained one parent's HL (i.e. Russian) while living in Sweden. In the cited study, Russian language, culture and contacts were highly valued by both parents and seen as important for the children to maintain. The parents not only reached a consensus on supporting their children's HL learning but more importantly, embedded HL practice into mundane family activities to help the children maintain the HL.

These findings fully support Spolsky (2004) argument that parents' language ideology shapes how they manage language on a daily basis (e.g. through different strategies). Various studies have highlighted parental strategies' importance in children's HL learning, including that differences in these strategies result in heterogenous impacts on children's language learning processes, experiences, proficiency and educational achievements (S. M. Park & Sarkar, 2007; Tannenbaum & Howie, 2002). Two types of parental strategies for supporting children's HL development have been identified: explicit and implicit approaches (Meyer-Pitton, 2013). Some parents prefer to adopt more explicit approaches to support children's language learning such as reading books, telling stories and setting up language tasks, while other parents' strategies may be more implicit or indirect (Meyer-Pitton, 2013). Indirect activities include travelling abroad with offspring and attending activities, which can provide children with social opportunities to experience a language other than English in real life and thus to increase the children's interest in learning the HL.

When supporting their children's HL learning, parents in immigrant countries encounter many challenges related to social, economic, time allocation or other factors (Liao & Larke, 2008; M. Y. Park, 2019; Yan, 2003). These obstacles might arise from within the family (e.g. economic status, parents' divergent opinions on HL learning and children's attitudes towards the HL) or the surrounding community (e.g. an absence of HL environments and limited learning resources). Researchers have found that most respondents consider the lack of HL environments and parents' inconsistent perceptions of their children's HL learning to be the main barriers to maintaining children's HL learning in English-speaking countries. For example, Yan's (2003) study of obstacles to maintaining HLs confirmed that 70% of the parents from different HL groups (e.g. Chinese, Spanish and Hebrew) encounter one or more of the greatest challenges to maintaining children's HL. These include the absence of HL environments and opportunities to use the HL in English-speaking countries. Concurrently, 37% of Chinese and 44% of Arab immigrant parents reported other obstacles such as their partners' failure to help and support their children's HL maintenance. This challenge becomes more apparent and even the main challenge in cross-cultural families due to parents' inconsistent perceptions of their children's HL learning. For instance, M. Y. Park (2019) research highlighted the disappointments, anxieties and difficulties that Southeast Asian immigrant mothers in cross-cultural marriages experienced regarding their HL because of their Korean partners and family members' criticism and opposition.

A few studies have explored both parent's views on children's maintaining Japanese, Korean and Spanish as an HL in cross-cultural families (King & Fogle, 2006; Seo, 2017; Tsushima & Guardado, 2019). These studies provide further evidence of the importance of both parents' attitudes towards their children's learning of HLs and the formulation of FLPs. For example, Tsushima and Guardado (2019) determined that, when parents from different language backgrounds have dissimilar opinions of children's HL learning, the children's opportunities to receive rich HL input (i.e. Japanese) becomes harder, which leads to a loss of interest in that language. The cited study's results also confirm that the participating Japanese mothers feel frustrated when experiencing many challenges in the HL maintenance

process, which causes them to give up using Japanese at home.

In contrast, children in families with stable and active FLPs can make progress towards maintaining Spanish as an HL in the United States (King & Fogle, 2006). The cited research found that, despite parents' different language backgrounds, they both have a positive attitude towards the relevant parent's HL, and they are willing to adopt language strategies to support their children's process of becoming bilingual. Thus far, no similar study has been published that has focused on individual parents' attitudes in cross-cultural families regarding maintaining Chinese as an HL in English-speaking immigrant countries such as Australia. These parents' degree of involvement in and perceptions of their children's learning and regular use of Chinese has also not been widely discussed. Therefore, the present research sought to explore these neglected topics to expand this field of knowledge further.

III. STUDY SAMPLE AND METHODOLOGY

A. Participants

This research's participants were parents from three cross-cultural families whose children were studying one of parents' HL, namely, Chinese in an English-language context, so that one of the parent's native languages is Chinese and the other parent's is English. More precisely, each parent with a Chinese ethnic background and native fluency in Chinese was considered to be a Chinese parent. The potential participants were screened and selected based on a background questionnaire focusing on their linguistic background. Information on the parents' highest education level and profession was also collected because these variables were expected to influence the parents' perceptions of learning a new language (Nesteruk, 2010). Those who met the requirement criteria and who were willing to be interviewed further were chosen for the study. In total, six interviewees from three cross-cultural families participated in this research. All the participants' details are furnished in Table 1.

TABLE 1.
PARTICIPANTS' PROFILE

Participant	Age Range	Chinese Ethnic Background	First/Second Language	Chinese Proficiency	Highest Education Level	Profession
F1 ND	40–50	Non-Chinese	English/none	Very poor	Technical school diploma	Electrician
F1 CM	40–50	Chinese	Chinese/English	Native	Bachelor's	Costume designer
F2 NM	30–40	Non-Chinese	English/none	Very poor	Bachelor's	Research assistant
F2 CD	30–40	Chinese	Chinese/English	Native	Bachelor's	Salesperson
F3 ND	40–50	Non-Chinese	English/none	Very poor	Doctorate	Lecturer
F3 CM	30–40	Chinese	Chinese/English	Native	Bachelor's	Pharmacist

The participants were coded to preserve confidentiality. The first code 'F' means Family number so that F1 is the first family. The second code 'N' or 'C' denotes if the parent has a Chinese ethnic background (i.e. N = non-Chinese background; C = Chinese background), while the third code indicates if the participant is the 'mum' (M) or 'dad' (D) in the family. Table 1 above also shows whether the Chinese parents are bilingual speakers of English and Chinese. They all have native-level Chinese proficiency even though they are from different places. In contrast, all three non-Chinese parents identified themselves as monolingual in English, and they are unable to communicate in Chinese even though some of them can say something quite basic, such as greetings (e.g. 你好 [hello]) or typical Chinese food names (e.g. 饺子 [dumpling] or 小笼包 [steamed buns]). All the parents except for Family One's father has completed a bachelor's or higher degree.

B. Data Collection Procedures and Analyses

In this study, the main data were collected from semi-structured interviews with parents who volunteered and who were filtered by a demographic survey. The survey was distributed to parents whose children were studying Chinese at the primary level in Chinese community schools (i.e. grade four and five). The questionnaire was prepared in a bilingual format (i.e. English and Chinese) to help parents from both language backgrounds better understand the questions. The survey contained questions about parents' demographics (i.e. parents' education, age group and profession) and linguistic background.

Based on the criterion of a cross-cultural family, this study recruited six parents from three families for a further interview. The semi-structured interviews were conducted in the language in which the respondents felt most comfortable communicating (i.e. either English or Chinese). To increase the data's validity and elicit each parent's independent ideas, the interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis to avoid any possible interference from others, especially the interviewees' partners. The list of semi-structured interview questions was also prepared in the two languages and printed out before the interview, and a copy was provided to the individual parents if they requested it. The questions were mainly about their personal views on their child's learning of Chinese and the ways they manage this process.

Each interview was audio-recorded, lasting about 15 to 20 minutes for Chinese parents and about 10 minutes for non-Chinese parents. All the interviews were transcribed verbatim, and the interviews conducted in Chinese were also translated into English, given the study's cultural context. The transcripts were then analysed against the identified themes within the parents' perceptions and approaches adopted to maintain their children's Chinese skills. In addition, a

comparative approach was applied in the analysis to ascertain the commonalities and differences within and across the three families.

IV. FINDINGS

A. *'My Husband Agreed to My Son Learning Chinese, But I Know He Does Not Like The Child to Speak Chinese in Front of Him' – Dissimilar Perceptions Between Mum and Dad in Cross-cultural Families*

All six parents related their children's learning of Chinese to the family's language background. The parents' responses included 'I am sending my child to learn Chinese because I have a Chinese family background and I can speak Chinese' (F1CM) and 'I have a Chinese culture and language background, [so,] of course, my children should learn Chinese' (F3CM). These answers clearly highlight the family background's importance to children's learning of Chinese in an immigrant country – a link echoed by the non-Chinese partners. For example, Family One's father admitted, 'I did not choose to send my child to study Chinese. [It was] only because of my wife. She has [a] Chinese family background.' This reaction was shared by Family Three's father, who said, 'the main reason for sending my child to community school is ... my partner[']s ... Chinese background and as I know she has a very good attachment towards China.'

The phrase 'family background' appears extremely frequently in all the parents' answers. This finding is consistent with those of various other studies of HL learning, namely, that the family's language background is one of the main driving forces for children to learn an HL in English-speaking countries (Lee, 2013). However, the interviews revealed that both parents from the same family have fewer views in common than the parents from other families with the same Chinese cultural and ethnic background and whose children are learning Chinese as an HL. More details can be found in Table 2.

TABLE 2.
CHINESE AND NON-CHINESE PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF CHILDREN'S LEARNING CHINESE AS AN HL

Chinese Parents' Perceptions (F1CM, F2CD, F3CM, F4CM)	Non-Chinese (Australian) Parents' Perceptions (F1ND, F2NM, F3ND, F4ND)
All parents: the child has to learn Chinese because of the individual parent's Chinese culture and language background.	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Australia is a multicultural and multilingual country, so the child should and must learn another new language (F1CM, F2CD, F3CM). 2. Learning Chinese is good for the child's future career development and being bilingual will expand his or her future job opportunities (F1CM, F2CD, F3CM). 3. Chinese is considered a communication tool that could help the child communicate with Chinese people efficiently and politely (F1CM, F2CD, F3CM); it also helps the child talk to older generations such as grandparents (F1CM, F3CM). 4. Learning Chinese as an HL is fantastic for the child's mental development (F2CD). 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Studying Chinese is not very important in Australia because Australia is an English-speaking country, and, almost everywhere, everyone speaks English in Australia (F1ND, F2NM, F3ND), so the ability to speak English is enough in Australia (F3ND). 2. The child is wasting time by learning Chinese (F1ND, F3ND). 3. Learning Chinese might help the child to keep busy (F2NM). 4. Learning Chinese might be important and necessary if the parents intend to send the child to Chinese-speaking countries in the future (F3ND).

All three Chinese parents in this study showed great interest in their children's learning of Chinese in contrast to their non-Chinese partners who seldom expressed the same level of interest in their children's Chinese learning. According to the Chinese parents, HL maintenance and the learning of Chinese is essential for their children's intercultural and intergenerational communication. HL learning also has personal benefits such as multilingual skills, mental development, diverse career options and personal wellbeing, as well as maintaining Chinese cultural values (see the Chinese parents' comments in the left column of Table 2 above). These parents appreciate Australia's multiculturalism. As one interviewee said, '[I hope] learning Chinese can help him become a bilingual person, which is better than being a monolingual person in this world.' (F3CM). Learning the HL is also connected to these parents' attachment to Chinese culture because they think 'Chinese culture is very broad and profound' (F1CM).

Australian parents have quite different views from their Chinese-background spouses. The most typical perception among these non-Chinese parents is that children do not need to learn Chinese in Australia. One parent said:

I don't think children learning Mandarin in Australia is very important because everywhere we speak English but not Chinese. Yes, it might be important if you want to send the children to Chinese-speaking countries like ... China or some places. ... Everywhere in Australia, we speak English but not Chinese. (F3ND)

This opinion was shared by the second family's non-Chinese mother. 'I wouldn't say it is specifically important in Australia. I think it's important for kids who have a [Chinese] background and both parents [are] from China or [are] related to China' (F2NM).

In Family One, the father's attitude was even quite negative as he asserted, 'it's a waste of money because I never speak Chinese to my son' (F1ND). This lack of support was mentioned by his wife. 'My husband agreed for my son to learn Chinese, but I know he does not like the child to speak Chinese in front of him' (F1CM). These responses indicate that parents without a Chinese cultural and ethnic background do not attach the same level of importance to their

children learning Chinese as their Chinese-background partner do. In general, non-Chinese parents associate their children's learning of Chinese more closely with the language's instrumentality, that is, offering more career choices or simply keeping the child 'busy' (see the right column in Table 2 above).

B. 'I Can(Not) Help Her' – Strategies Adopted by Chinese and Non-Chinese Parents to Assist Their Children to Learn Chinese

The most striking finding about the parental strategies used to support children's Chinese learning is that all the Chinese participants try to support their children's learning of that language. In contrast, the non-Chinese parents stated that they only lend occasional, indirect support to their children's Chinese learning. A summary of parental strategies is provided in Table 3.

TABLE 3.
KEY STRATEGIES ADOPTED BY PARENTS TO HELP THEIR CHILDREN LEARN CHINESE

Chinese Parents' Strategies	Non-Chinese (Australian) Parents' Strategies
1. This parent requires the child to finish homework with high quality work, and they sometimes study Chinese together (F1CM, F2CD, F3CM).	1. This parent buys Chinese books for the child (F2ND).
2. The parent travels with the child to China (F1CM, F2CD, F3CM).	2. Sometimes, the parents cook Chinese cuisine at home and eat in Chinese restaurants (F3ND).
3. This parent speaks Chinese to the child whenever possible (F1CM, F3CM).	3. This parent accompanies the other parent and the child on trips to Chinese-speaking countries (F2ND, F3ND).
4. The parent reads Chinese storybooks to the child almost every day (F1CM, F3CM).	4. The parents attend Chinese festival activities with the child (F2ND, F3ND).
5. This parent provides multi-media materials such as watching Chinese videos or movies (F1CM, F2CD, F3CM).	

Table 3 shows that all the Chinese parents are extremely proactive in terms of managing their children's Chinese learning. These adults promote the process via both explicit (e.g. helping them with homework, reading Chinese storybooks and practising Chinese as much as possible) and implicit approaches (e.g. taking the children to China and providing learning materials). These proactive measures have been confirmed by prior studies of other languages' maintenance (Meyer-Pitton, 2013; Polinsky, 2015). Family One's Chinese mother commented, 'whenever possible, I will help him learn Chinese' (F1CM).

Unsurprisingly, the Australian parents without a Chinese background are unable to deploy direct mechanisms to help their children's HL learning given that these adults are neither proficient in nor capable of using Chinese, as they admitted in the interviews. However, the interview data on these non-Chinese parents highlight their indirect involvement in their children's Chinese learning, such as buying Chinese books, being part of family gatherings during Chinese festivals, visiting Chinese restaurants and asking children how to say something in Chinese (F2NM, F3ND). Notably, both Chinese and non-Chinese parents see accompanying their children on trips to Chinese-speaking areas to be a useful strategy.

Nevertheless, Family One's father admitted, 'I never help my son learn Chinese and do any activities related to Chinese' because 'my son is an Australian. He doesn't need to learn Chinese in Australia.' This response underlines that parents' lack of participation in their children's HL learning is strongly linked to their negative perception of that language. This specific father's negative attitude could also be related to his career as an electrician since he does not need to use other languages on the job or his educational background does not encourage a positive attitude (see Table 1 above for details).

C. 'My Child Studies in a Totally English-speaking Environment and Only Speaks English' – Challenges in Facilitating HL Maintenance

While managing their children's learning of Chinese as an HL, the parents interviewed face various challenges. These obstacles (see Table 4) are related to social, economic, time allocation or other factors, which corresponds with Liao and Larke (2008) results. For parents from cross-cultural marriages, the barriers could be more serious due to differences in parents' perceptions, cultural backgrounds and language gaps.

TABLE 4.
CHALLENGES CROSS-CULTURAL MARRIAGE PARENTS ENCOUNTER WHEN SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S CHINESE LEARNING

Chinese Parents' Challenges	Non-Chinese Parents' Challenges
1. An appropriate sociolinguistic environment is lacking, and the child is unwilling to speak Chinese (F1CM, F2CD, F3CM).	1. Time and money are an issue (F1ND, F3ND).
2. The child needs to be encouraged to continue learning Chinese and going to Chinese school when he or she wants to quit the Chinese classes (F1CM, F2CD, F3CM).	2. This parent's lack of Chinese skills and proficiency is the main challenge (F1ND, F2NM, F3ND).
3. The child does not show much interest in acquiring Chinese (F1CM, F2CD).	
4. The other parent does not provide adequate support (F1CM, F2CD, F3CM).	

The most common challenge mentioned by all the Chinese parents (F1CM, F2CD, F3CM) is that, despite their support and their children's efforts to learn Chinese, their offspring still feel that acquiring Chinese is difficult and they have little interest in learning that language. For example, Family One's mother noted, 'there was a period that he [her son] was in grade three. One day, my child told me he wanted to give up learning Chinese because he felt it was too difficult to learn and write short essays.' This difficulty has also been reported by parents in previous studies, who have problems maintaining their children's enthusiasm about learning Chinese in an English-speaking country (Baig, 2011; Yan, 2003).

The second most common challenge mentioned by Chinese parents (F1CM, F2CD, F3CM) is their children's negative thoughts about learning Chinese, which can be attributed to the lack of suitable sociolinguistic environments at both the macro (i.e. society) and micro (i.e. family) level. On the one hand, these environments play an important role in children's language learning and affect their language preferences in daily life (Lie, 2017). Family Three's mother said, 'she [her daughter] is studying in a totally English-speaking environment all day and speaking English all time.' This finding echoes Kang's (2015) findings that, once children start their schooling, their use of English increases and they do not want to speak the HL in daily life.

On the other hand, the Chinese parents interviewed want their partners to support their children's learning of Chinese and hope that their spouse will take their side in terms of encouraging their children to learn Chinese (F2CD, F3CM). One mother reported, 'sometimes, I feel it is hard for me, with only one-person teaching, supporting and encouraging our child to learn Chinese in the long term' (F3CM). One child even asked his non-Chinese mother to help him get out of doing his Chinese homework. Family Two's Chinese father said, 'when the child doesn't want to learn Chinese or finish his homework, he goes to his mum, who comes to me and convinces me that he doesn't have to finish the [Chinese] homework' (F2CD).

The non-Chinese parents under study felt that their extremely limited ability to speak Chinese is one of the most serious barriers to getting involved in their children's HL learning. For example, Family Three's father stated, 'that I don't know the [HL] language is the biggest obstacle to [my] help[ing] their learning.' This excerpt provides further evidence that parents' proficiency in the HL can affect parental language management and strategies in children's language learning processes (Tam & Chan, 2010).

In addition, these parents also refer to quite practical problems in terms of supporting their children's learning of Chinese, such as time and money constraints. This type of challenge was clearly a problem for both Family One and Three's father. One said, 'I think it's a waste of money for him to learn Chinese in Australia' (F1ND). The other father observed:

We discussed a couple of times [whether] to send or not to send ... [our] child to the community language school because it's not just learning a language. It also costs money and also takes [up the] parents' time. If the financial prospect[s] and the time is [sic] not available, I don't think we will support ... [our] child[s] ... going further in [the] community school. (F3ND)

Regarding time management and tasks' priority, Chinese parents prefer their children to learn Chinese versus to play, while their Australian spouses feel that allocating weekend or leisure time for children to do other extra-curricular activities or sports is more important. One non-Chinese father's answer clearly articulated this view:

I feel like ... the kid lost many things rather than [gained] benefits because sometimes I need to send my child [to Chinese school] on Saturday or Sunday. After that, she comes home to do homework. She cannot play any sports. She cannot spend time with friends on weekends and [do] some other activities. (F3ND)

V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This study's results show that parents' perceptions of language in cross-cultural families play an extremely influential role in their children's maintenance of one parent's HL, which is related closely to ethnic background. Each parent within the same family has differing opinions about their children's learning of Chinese, in contrast to parents with the same cultural background, who share many of their language perceptions and management approaches. For instance, the Chinese parents interviewed, without exception, reported a strong inclination towards and highly positive perceptions of their children's learning of Chinese, but the non-Chinese parents have many negative perceptions of their children's learning of Chinese.

These differences in attitude also affect how parents manage the language learning process. For example, Chinese spouses, in spite of extremely limited Chinese sociolinguistic settings in Australia, continue to prioritise their children's HL learning by offering as much explicit support as possible. In contrast, their non-Chinese partners' support is largely confined to providing the necessary resources or travelling with their family to Chinese-speaking areas.

Variations in parents' sociocultural backgrounds and values may contribute to the differences between the cross-cultural parents interviewed in terms of language ideology and management approaches. Whilst their Chinese partners want their children to spend leisure time studying Chinese, non-Chinese parents think weekends should be used for relaxation and other activities. This divergence indicates a difference not merely in the two parents' cultural backgrounds but more importantly in their language ideology and subsequent language management approach.

Spolsky (2004) argues that individuals' linguistic values are shaped by four forces within society: sociolinguistic,

sociocultural, sociopolitical and socioeconomic. This finding could well be true of both Chinese parents and their Australian non-Chinese partners in the present study, whose language ideology of inheriting and developing their own language and culture have greatly influenced their decisions regarding their children's learning of Chinese. The results clearly show that Chinese immigrant parents, who are influenced by Chinese traditional culture, not only ask their children to study their own HL but also set quite high standards for their children's Chinese maintenance. However, non-Chinese parents, who are influenced by Western mainstream culture, pay more attention to their children's choice of other extra-curricular activities in their leisure time rather than academic studies.

In short, the presence of one parent with a non-mainstream family background does not guarantee that both parents will have the same level of interest in their children's learning of that parent's HL. A specific spouse's language background in a family can stimulate children of immigrants in English-speaking countries to learn an HL to some degree, but each parent's different perceptions affects their choices regarding their children's learning of one parent's HL, as with Chinese parents in the present research (Kremer-Sadlik & Fatigante, 2015). These different perceptions do not contribute to the formation of a stable FLP, in which both parents must share common perceptions regarding their children's language development (Curdt-Christiansen, 2018) and work closely together to foster their children's HL learning (Schwartz, 2010).

The current study sought to enrich the field of HL maintenance in terms of parents' perceptions and management approaches by conducting a case study involving Chinese as a HL in Australia. However, the results may not be applicable to all cross-cultural marriage families who are maintaining Chinese or other languages as an HL in English-speaking countries due to the small sample size (i.e. only six parents from three families). Given the relatively restricted number of participants, future studies need to increase the sample size and include participants from different ethnic backgrounds, various regions and contrasting educational background and professions (Nesteruk, 2010). This wider focus could greatly help to clarify the present research's full implications and investigate cross-cultural families from different backgrounds in more detail. In addition, more studies are needed that incorporate children's opinions in cross-cultural families on HL language learning, which could enrich the current findings and expand this research field's scope. Whether non-Chinese parents' HL strategies or activities are developed and implemented independently and willingly also requires further investigation (Whalley, 2017). These parents' participation could be how non-Chinese parents try to support and show respect for their partners' decisions, as well as endeavour to avoid family conflicts or arguments.

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