

Parents' Attitudes Toward Chinese–English Bilingual Education and Chinese-Language Use

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Abstract

This study surveyed 86 parents who enrolled their children in a Chinese–English bilingual preschool in San Francisco. The participants were asked their opinions on bilingual education, the reasons for sending their children to a Chinese–English bilingual school, their attitudes toward bilingual education, their use of Chinese and English, and their expectations for their children and the language environment at home. It was found that parents strongly support Chinese–English bilingual education and understood the purpose and underlying principles of bilingual education. Although there were some differences between the English-dominant and Chinese-dominant parents' responses, the major reasons parents enrolled their children in Chinese–English bilingual school were the practical advantages of being bilingual (e.g., better career opportunities), positive effects on self-image, and development of skills enabling effective communication within the Chinese-speaking community. The majority of the parents intended to encourage their children to speak Chinese at home. However, a gap existed between expectation and actual practice. Parents' expectation of their children's level of Chinese competency varied due to differences in parents' Chinese proficiency and the availability of Chinese resources at home. The results suggest that both English-dominant and Chinese-dominant parents are very supportive of developing bilingualism in their children. The implications of this study for community Chinese heritage language programs and for Chinese–English bilingual schools are that schools need to work in concert with parents to establish more effective

home–school partnerships to meet the different language needs and expectations of the parents and students, and to provide students with the necessary language and literacy experiences in a meaningful way.

Introduction

Despite recent attacks on bilingual education, some parents continue to enroll their children in bilingual programs. Therefore, it is important to investigate why parents choose bilingual schools for their children. Several attitudinal studies (Amaral, 2001; Lee, 1999; Lindholm-Leary, 2001; Schecter, Sharken-Taboada, & Bayley, 1996; Shannon & Milian, 2002; Shin & Kim, 1998; Shin & Gribbons, 1996; Shin & Lee, 1996; Young & Tran, 1999) have been conducted involving Spanish-speaking, Korean-speaking, Hmong-speaking, and Vietnamese-speaking parents. However, little research has been done regarding attitudes toward bilingual education held by Chinese parents. The paucity of research on Chinese–English bilingual education and/or Chinese parents' language attitude is troubling. The absence of research has contributed to the “invisibility” of Chinese Americans as frontline participants in the molding of children and educational policy (Sheets & Chew, 2002). In 2000, there were 980,642 Chinese in California; the Chinese constituted the largest ethnic Asian group in California, with approximately 152,620 living in San Francisco and 329,352 in Los Angeles (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000). According to recent studies (Chao, 1997; Wang, 1996), community Chinese-language schools (both Saturday schools and after-school programs) have become an integral part of the Chinese communities in America, with approximately 82,675 students studying Chinese in 634 Chinese-language schools across the nation in addition to attending regular school. Some parents, however, choose schools with Chinese–English bilingual programs for their children's education.

Fisherman (1991) argues that school-based programs alone are insufficient to maintain and develop a native language. Rather, language practice in the home is the most crucial factor in predicting whether a language will be maintained across generations. Research studies on language proficiencies provides further evidence that home language use is of primary importance in native language maintenance (Hakuta & d'Andrea, 1992; Hakuta & Pease-Alvarez, 1994).

This study explores the following questions: (a) How do parents who have children in Chinese–English bilingual preschool view bilingual education? (b) What are the reasons parents send their children to Chinese–English bilingual preschool? (c) What are parents' attitudes and actual practices regarding language, and their language-related expectations for their children? and (d) How supportive is the Chinese–English bilingual language environment at home?

Methodology

Background of Chinese–English Bilingual Preschool

The school in this story was the first Chinese American bilingual preschool established in San Francisco. Since its first class in 1974, this school has successfully promoted bilingualism and multiculturalism in developmental activities that emphasize both learning and playing for young students. Currently, there are 82 students, between the ages of 3 and 5, of whom 70% are Chinese Americans and 30% from various ethnic groups. About half of the students come from low-income families and are enrolled in state- or city-subsidized programs. Some children have special needs and are receiving speech therapy. To serve the communities, it offers half-day and full-day programs that range from private nonprofit to state-funded programs. Funding comes from the California State Department of Education, the city and county of San Francisco, grants from private foundations, and tuition fees. There are 12 members on the teaching staff; all of them are qualified and certified with the state-approved early childhood education courses, and a majority of them have child development permits. Classes are conducted in both English and Chinese (50% instruction time in each language). There is one English teacher and one Chinese teacher in each class, allowing the children to develop proficiency in both languages. The school's child-centered curriculum is developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate, designed to encourage exploration, hands-on experience, creativity, imagination, and social interaction. In addition to regular field trips and library experiences, the program also provides a creative curriculum based on monthly themes of different cultures.

Participants

Eighty-six parents of the children who currently attend a Chinese–English bilingual preschool in San Francisco participated in the present study. Fifty-two participants identified themselves as Chinese dominant and 34 as English dominant. All of the English-dominant respondents had at least a college degree, whereas only 60% of the Chinese-dominant respondents did. Furthermore, 13% of the Chinese-dominant parents had only a primary or secondary school level of education. About 80% of the English-dominant respondents had an annual income of more than \$50,000, compared with 33% of the Chinese-dominant respondents. Moreover, about 60% of the Chinese-dominant parents had an annual income lower than \$20,000, compared with 3.4% of the English-dominant respondents. Thus, it is important to note that most Chinese-dominant parents had incomes significantly lower than those of their English-dominant counterparts.

Selected demographic information of the participants is presented in Table 1. As shown in the table, the majority of the participants were born outside the United States. Sixty-three of the participants have lived in the United States for more than 10 years.

Table 1
Parents' Demographic Information

Demographic measure		Number ^a	Percentage
Birthplace	United States	33	38.4
	China	19	22.1
	Hong Kong	18	20.9
	Taiwan	4	4.7
	Vietnam	5	5.8
	Malaysia	1	1.2
	Other	1	1.2
Number of years in United States	< 1	1	1.2
	1–3	3	3.5
	4–6	8	9.3
	7–10	5	5.8
	> 10	63	73.3
Number of languages spoken	1	25	29.1
	2	58	67.4
	3	3	3.5

^aTotal number of participants was 86.

Sixty-two of the 86 participants spoke at least two languages. The majority of the participants (60.5%) identified Chinese as their native language; 39.5% reported English as their native language. As Table 2 indicates, 41.8% of the respondents indicated that English was their second language (L2), and 25.6% reported Chinese as their L2.

Table 2

Languages Spoken by Parents

	Chinese	English	Vietnamese	Spanish	Other	None
Native language	60.5%	39.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Second language	25.6%	41.8%	1.2%	1.2%	1.2%	29.0%

According to the respondents' self-report concerning Chinese proficiency (see Table 3a), the majority of the Chinese-dominant parents reported that they could use Chinese "very well." Only 50% of the English-dominant parents reported having fair and/or above conversational Chinese proficiency, and almost all had very poor Chinese literacy. In terms of English proficiency, the majority of the English-dominant parents reported they could use English "very well." For Chinese-dominant parents, 74% believed that they had fair and/or above conversational English proficiency, 78% thought they had fair and/or above reading ability, and 77.5% reported fair and/or above writing skill (see Table 3b).

Table 3a

Parents' Chinese Proficiency

Proficiency in . . .	Respondents by language	1 (very well)	2 (well)	3 (fair)	4 (poor)	5 (very poor)
Speaking	Chinese-dominant parents	76.9%	7.7%	7.7%	1.9%	5.8%
	English-dominant parents	10.0%	3.3%	36.7%	23.3%	26.7%
Reading	Chinese-dominant parents	61.2%	8.2%	8.2%	6.1%	16.3%
	English-dominant parents	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	6.9%	93.1%
Writing	Chinese-dominant parents	50.0%	12.5%	10.4%	4.2%	22.9%
	English-dominant parents	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	3.6%	96.4%

Table 3b

Parents' English Proficiency

Proficiency in . . .	Respondents by language	1 (very well)	2 (well)	3 (fair)	4 (poor)	5 (very poor)
Speaking	Chinese-dominant parents	36.0%	28.0%	10.0%	14.0%	12.0%
	English-dominant parents	94.1%	5.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Reading	Chinese-dominant parents	42.0%	20.0%	16.0%	8.0%	14.0%
	English-dominant parents	91.2%	8.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Writing	Chinese-dominant parents	32.7%	22.4%	22.4%	6.1%	16.3%
	English-dominant parents	76.5%	14.7%	8.8%	0.0%	0.0%

Instrument

This pilot study used a questionnaire with four sections, developed by the researcher. Part I was composed of seven items concerning participants' language proficiency and language use. A rating scale was designed to measure the participants' self-perceptions of their Chinese and English proficiency. Part II consisted of three items regarding parents' expectations for their children, seven items focusing on the reasons parents enrolled their children in Chinese–English bilingual school (participants could check all that applied), and six items concerning parents' attitudes toward bilingual education, based on the principles of bilingual education outlined in previous research (Krashen & Biber, 1988; Cummins, 1989) and on previous attitudinal studies (Lao, 2003; Shin & Kim, 1998; Shin & Krashen, 1996; Shin & Gribbons, 1996; Shin & Lee, 1996; Shin, Anton, & Krashen, 1999). As part of the expectations measurement, parents were asked what type of school they preferred for their child: Chinese–English bilingual school (K–12) or regular school (K–12). (Participants were allowed to check all that applied.) Part III contained ten items aimed to obtain information about the Chinese and English print and media environment at home. Data from Part III was not used in this study. Part IV was composed of

three items at the beginning of the survey and four items at the end of the survey regarding participants' demographic information (see Appendix). The survey was translated from English to Chinese by the researcher. Participants had the choice of responding in either Chinese or English. Although the survey requested information from both parents, only the data provided by the person who completed the survey was used in the analysis.

The survey was administered in school by the researcher and by the school administrators. A note explaining the purpose of the study was attached to the survey. The participants were assured that the survey would remain anonymous and served a research purpose only.

Limitations

The following limitations were evident in this study:

1. The particular composition of the sample of parents who enrolled their children at one Chinese–English bilingual preschool in San Francisco involved in this study might limit the generalizability of the study. A similar study conducted with parents who sent their children to Chinese–English bilingual elementary, middle, or high schools could possibly yield different results.
2. Both Chinese proficiency and English proficiency were measured by parents' self-perceptions. Variations could be attributed to individuals' standards of oral and written competence in Chinese and in English.
3. The study used questionnaires to obtain information. All the disadvantages of this technique were recognized.

Results

Opinion on the Principles of Bilingual Education

The survey results on parents' opinion on the principles of bilingual education are presented in Table 4.

The first item investigated parents' opinion of the statement, "The goal of bilingual education is to develop both academic English and L1 [native or heritage language]." Nearly all participants from both language groups (English dominant and Chinese dominant) strongly believed that the goal of bilingual education was the development of both English and the L1.

The second question asked about the transfer of literacy. A majority of the English-dominant parents and the Chinese-dominant parents agreed that developing literacy in an L1 would help facilitate the development of reading and writing in an L2. A small minority of the respondents disagreed, and a sizable number of English-dominant and Chinese-dominant parents were unsure.

Table 4

Parents' Opinions Regarding Principles of Bilingual Education

Statement presented to respondents	Chinese-dominant parents (N = 52)			English-dominant parents (N = 34)		
	Agree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Disagree	Not sure
1. The goal of bilingual education is to develop both academic English and L1 [native or heritage language].	88.2%	5.9%	5.9%	97.1%	0.0%	2.9%
2. If students develop literacy in L1, it will facilitate the development of reading and writing in the second language (L2).	64.0%	10.0%	26.0%	69.7%	0.0%	30.3%
3. Learning subject matter in L1 helps a second language student learn subject matter better when he/she studies them in L2.	58.0%	16.0%	26.0%	50.0%	2.9%	47.1%
4. If a student is proficient in both L1 and L2, he/she should be enrolled in a classroom where the L1 is part of the curriculum.	63.3%	24.5%	12.2%	64.7%	5.9%	29.4%
5. Students must learn English as quickly as possible; therefore, there is no need to develop the L1 in school.	6.1%	81.6%	12.2%	2.9%	70.6%	26.5%
6. If a second language learner is placed in English-only classes, he/she will learn English better and faster.	54.9%	21.6%	23.5%	53.1%	21.9%	25.0%

The third question asked parents if they thought learning subject matter in the L1 improves second language learners' mastery of subject matter studied in the L2. The fourth and fifth questions asked about parents' opinion on the desirability of developing high levels of competence in the L1 (Chinese). The majority of the English-dominant and Chinese-dominant parents believed it was important for children to continue developing the L1 in school even though they were proficient in their L1 and L2. More English-dominant parents than Chinese-dominant parents were not sure about this. More Chinese-dominant parents than English-dominant parents felt that there was a need to develop children's L1 in school.

The sixth question asked parents if they felt that students would be better off in English-only classes. Over half of the participants from both the English-dominant and the Chinese-dominant groups felt that English language learners would be better off in English-only classes. About one fifth to one quarter of the parents were unsure.

Reasons Parents Chose Chinese–English Bilingual Education

As presented in Table 5, the top three reasons given by Chinese-dominant parents for enrolling their children in bilingual preschool were: (a) A high level of bilingualism could provide their children better career opportunities; (b) Chinese-language development would facilitate communication with the Chinese-speaking community; and (c) Chinese–English bilingual education would help children develop a positive self-image. The top three reasons given by English-dominant parents were: (a) Bilingual education would enhance the opportunity for children to be Chinese–English bilingual; (b) Chinese-language development would facilitate communication with the Chinese-speaking community; and (c) A high level of bilingualism could provide their children better career opportunities. The vast majority of Chinese-dominant parents strongly believed that bilingualism would bring their children practical advantages and would help youngsters establish a positive self-image. The English-dominant parents, unlike their Chinese-dominant counterparts, strongly believed that bilingual education's chief value was to provide their children the opportunity to be Chinese–English bilingual, which is difficult to obtain without a bilingual education program. Similar to the Chinese-dominant parents, the English-dominant parents ranked communication with the Chinese-dominant community as the second most important reason to send their children to bilingual school. Although the English-dominant parents did not rank "high level of bilingualism can provide better career opportunities" as their top reason for choosing bilingual education as the Chinese-dominant parents did, they chose it as the third most important reason.

Table 5

Reasons Parents Chose Chinese–English Bilingual Education

Reason stated	Chinese-dominant parents	English-dominant parents
1. Chinese is my child's stronger language; bilingual education eases the transition.	23.1%	5.9%
2. English is my child's stronger language; bilingual education enhances the opportunity of becoming Chinese–English bilingual.	36.5%	73.5%
3. Chinese development can facilitate communication with elders.	51.9%	41.2%
4. Chinese development can facilitate communication with Chinese-speaking community.	57.7%	70.6%
5. My child can develop a positive self-image.	55.8%	38.2%
6. I believe a high level of bilingualism can result in superior cognitive development.	48.1%	55.9%
7. I believe a high level of bilingualism can provide better career opportunities.	71.2%	67.7%

Parental Expectations

Parental expectations of their children's Chinese proficiency

As Table 6 shows, Chinese-dominant parents held much higher expectations for their children than English-dominant parents regarding their children's Chinese proficiency. More than half of the Chinese-dominant parents expected their children to achieve middle school to high school–level literacy.

Table 6

Level of Chinese Proficiency Parents Expect Their Children To Achieve

Level of Chinese proficiency	Chinese-dominant parents (N = 52)	English-dominant parents (N = 34)
Conversational fluency	29.4%	38.2%
Elementary school–level literacy	13.7%	23.5%
Middle school–level literacy	25.5%	8.8%
High school–level literacy	31.4%	29.4%

Types of school parents desire their children to attend

As Table 7 shows, both English-dominant and Chinese-dominant parents were very enthusiastic about enrolling their children in Chinese–English bilingual elementary school. English-dominant parents retained the same enthusiasm for Chinese–English bilingual middle school, while Chinese-dominant parents were a little less interested in sending their children to Chinese–English bilingual middle school. Only a little over one third of Chinese-dominant parents expressed interest in sending their children to Chinese–English bilingual high school, while two thirds of the English-dominant parents wanted their children to continue their Chinese–English bilingual education at the high school level. Thus, it is interesting to note that while the English-dominant parents wanted their children to stay in Chinese–English bilingual education longer and had lower expectations regarding their children’s level of Chinese proficiency, the Chinese-dominant parents wanted their children to attend Chinese–English bilingual education for a shorter period of time but expected their children to achieve a higher level of Chinese proficiency.

Table 7

Types of School Parents Desired Their Children to Attend

Respondents by language	Elementary school		Middle school		High school	
	Chinese–English bilingual	Mainstream	Chinese–English bilingual	Mainstream	Chinese–English bilingual	Mainstream
English-dominant parents	78.8%	21.2%	78.1%	25.0%	66.7%	33.3%
Chinese-dominant parents	75.5%	24.5%	61.2%	38.8%	37.5%	62.5%

Parents’ Attitudes Toward Language Versus Actual Practice

To find out parents’ attitudes toward language and language use at home, the survey asked parents what language they desired their children to speak (see Table 8).

A majority of the English-dominant parents reported that they desired their children to speak both English and Chinese at home. Among the Chinese-dominant parents, slightly more desired their children to speak both languages than to speak only Chinese, with the fewest number preferring only English to be spoken by their children at home.

Table 8

Language Parents Desire Children to Speak at Home

Respondents by language	English	Chinese	Both English and Chinese
Chinese-dominant parents	11.5%	40.4%	48.1%
English-dominant parents	29.4%	2.9%	67.6%

Parents' professed ideals did not always match actual language usage, however. This mismatch was found when the survey asked parents what language was actually spoken at home (see Table 9).

Table 9

Language Actually Spoken at Home

	Respondents by language	English	Chinese	Mostly English and some Chinese	Mostly Chinese and some English	Not applicable
Language parents speak to children	Chinese-dominant parents	13.5%	28.8%	34.6%	23.1%	0.0%
	English-dominant parents	61.3%	3.2%	35.5%	0.0%	0.0%
Language children speak to their siblings	Chinese-dominant parents	25.0%	13.5%	23.1%	23.1%	15.4%
	English-dominant parents	57.6%	0.0%	27.3%	0.0%	15.2%

Although 40% of the Chinese-dominant parents desired their children to speak to them only in Chinese, a mere 29% of the Chinese-dominant parents spoke to their children only in Chinese. The majority of the English-dominant parents spoke to their children exclusively (61.3%) or mostly (35.5%) in English. Children of Chinese-dominant parents spoke more Chinese with their siblings than did children of English-dominant parents.

Language Environment at Home

As shown in Table 10, about 25% of both the English- and Chinese-dominant parents reported that their children possessed more than 20 books written in Chinese, while almost all of the English-dominant parents and a majority of Chinese-dominant parents said their children had more than 20 titles of English books at home.

Table 10

Number of Chinese and English Books Children Possess at Home

	Respondents by language	None	1–20	21–40	41–60	61–80	> 80
Number of Chinese books	English-dominant parents	18.2%	57.6%	9.1%	12.1%	0.0%	3.0%
	Chinese-dominant parents	17.3%	57.7%	13.5%	5.8%	1.9%	3.8%
Number of English books	English-dominant parents	2.9%	2.9%	8.8%	17.6%	23.5%	44.1%
	Chinese-dominant parents	1.9%	28.8%	26.9%	13.5%	7.7%	21.2%

According to Table 11, the majority of the English-dominant parents read English storybooks to their children almost every day. However, most of them rarely or never read stories to their children in Chinese. On the other hand, Chinese-dominant parents read more Chinese stories to their children than their English-dominant counterparts. Almost one third of these Chinese-dominant parents rarely or never read stories to their children, irrespective of the language of the storybooks.

Table 11

Frequency of Parents Reading Stories in Chinese and English to Children

	Respondents by language	Almost every day	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
Reading story in English to children	English-dominant parents	30.0%	36.0%	16.0%	18.0%
	Chinese-dominant parents	79.4%	14.7%	5.9%	0.0%
Reading story in Chinese to children	English-dominant parents	18.4%	46.9%	16.3%	18.4%
	Chinese-dominant parents	3.1%	6.3%	28.1%	62.5%

As Table 12 shows, all of the English-dominant parents reported that they did recreational reading only in English. In contrast, Chinese-dominant parents commonly read for leisure in both languages.

Table 12

Language in Which Parents Read for Pleasure

Respondents by language	English	Chinese	Mostly English and some Chinese	Mostly Chinese and some English	Other
Chinese-dominant parents	25.5%	27.5%	29.4%	15.7%	2.0%
English-dominant parents	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Discussion

The results of this survey provide evidence that both Chinese-dominant and English-dominant parents strongly support Chinese–English bilingual education. The survey suggested that the majority of the participants understand the purpose and underlying principles of bilingual education. They believe that bilingual education facilitates children’s language

development in both the L1 and L2. A number of studies have confirmed that students who develop higher levels of literacy in their L1 have an easier time developing literacy in the L2 (Krashen, 1996). In agreement with previous studies (Lee, 1999; Shin & Kim, 1998; Shin & Krashen, 1996; Shin & Gribbons, 1996; Shin & Lee, 1996; Shin, Anton, & Krashen, 1999; Young & Tran, 1999), there was strong support for this idea in the study.

Krashen (1996) has argued that subject matter taught in an L1 provides background knowledge that helps make English input more comprehensible, thus accelerating English-language development. The present study found that slightly more Chinese-dominant parents (58%) than English-dominant parents (50%) agreed with this principle, and more English-dominant respondents (47.1%) than Chinese-dominant respondents (26%) were not sure about this principle. This result is also consistent with Shin's findings (Shin & Kim, 1998; Shin & Gribbons, 1996; Shin & Lee, 1996).

In addition, parents believe that developing high levels of competence in the L1 should be promoted in schools. Once again, the results match closely those found in several previous studies (Shin & Krashen, 1996; Shin, Anton, & Krashen, 1999; Young & Tran, 1999).

The parents in this study are enthusiastic about bilingual education, either with respect to the goal of English-language development or the goal of continued development of the L1. However, with respect to the development of English as an L2, many of them do not view bilingual education as a vehicle for achieving high levels of proficiency. While they support the underlying principles of bilingual education, they feel that English-language development would be faster in an all-English classroom. This finding clearly conflicts with the support shown for the underlying principles of bilingual education.

The survey also indicated that the major reasons parents enrolled their children in Chinese–English bilingual education were the practical advantages of being bilingual, such as better career opportunities, positive self-image, and effective communication within the Chinese-speaking community. These results are very similar to those found by Lindholm-Leary (2001) and in Shannon and Milian's study (2002) on reasons parents send their children to Spanish dual-language programs in Colorado. Clearly, many parents value bilingualism and understand the importance of being bilingual and biliterate. The findings of this study counter bilingual opponents' claims that parents do not want bilingual education for their children and that bilingual education programs are forced upon them.

The survey revealed that parents' expectations concerning the level of Chinese proficiency differed between Chinese-dominant parents and English-dominant parents. The majority of Chinese-dominant parents expected their children to achieve conversational fluency and a middle school to high school level of literacy. For English-dominant parents, the majority also expected their children to achieve conversational fluency. However, they were satisfied if their children achieved an elementary school level of literacy.

Moreover, parents' expectations regarding the type of schools also differed between Chinese-dominant parents and English-dominant parents. Although the Chinese-dominant parents had high expectations for their children's Chinese proficiency, they only expected their children to participate in bilingual programs through middle school. On the other hand, the English-dominant parents expected their children to continue attending Chinese-English bilingual programs through high school. These results were quite different from Amaral's (2001) findings that parents in her study tended to choose school models for their children that matched the language pattern of the home. The difference in expectations between the two parental groups in this study may be due to the fact that Chinese-dominant parents believed that Chinese proficiency at the middle school level is sufficient since they believe that the L1 can be further developed in the home environment. Furthermore, parents may want their children to focus on their academics in English as preparation for the university. In the case of the English-dominant parents, the data reflects their strong belief in bilingual education programs as a way of maximizing Chinese-language input and, therefore, attaining bilingualism. This is consistent with the findings that English-dominant parents' most mentioned reason for sending their children to Chinese-English bilingual school was that bilingual education enhances the opportunity of becoming Chinese-English bilingual.

The survey found that the majority of parents reported that although they wanted to promote Chinese-language use in the home, use of Chinese did not increase in practice. Parents and their children spoke more English than Chinese at home, thus resulting in a gap between a general desire for Chinese to be spoken and actual practice. This discrepancy may be attributed to the fact that parents' proficiency levels in Chinese were limited, often preventing them from utilizing the language.

The survey results suggest that both parental groups are very supportive of developing bilingualism in their children. However, high-level bilingualism and biliteracy are difficult to achieve when the exposure to oral and written Chinese is limited in their daily life.

Findings from the present study indicate that the knowledge of Chinese language that children learned in Chinese-English bilingual school often did not get reinforced at home because parents, especially English-dominant parents, did not use Chinese often enough with their children at home. In general, Chinese might be used at the conversational level, but the use of written Chinese was limited. The majority of the Chinese-dominant parents occasionally or rarely read to their children in Chinese, while the majority of the English-dominant parents never read to their children in Chinese. Limited exposure to both oral and written Chinese was especially evident in English-dominant families. Many English-dominant parents rated their oral and written Chinese-language proficiency as "poor" and "very poor"; this may have limited their use of Chinese with their children.

In addition, there is a lack of Chinese children's books in both the Chinese- and English-dominant families. Majority of Chinese- and English-dominant parents reported that their children possessed no more than 20 titles of Chinese children's books. In a print-poor environment at home, children, in general, found it difficult to further reinforce and develop the Chinese literacy they learned from school. Hence, the lack of access to Chinese print limits their literacy growth in the language. Nevertheless, children of Chinese-dominant parents may be more likely to attain high levels of Chinese literacy than children of English-dominant parents because of the literacy conduits and models in reading Chinese for pleasure provided by their parents.

Implications and Conclusion

According to Tse's studies (2001a, 2001b), high levels of literacy in an L1 can be fostered only when a number of conditions coexist that support its development, such as access to L1 literacy environments, the opportunity to use the language, and guidance from more literate adults. To foster bilingualism and L1 maintenance, educators and parents who support Chinese-English bilingual programs must think creatively and provide children with high-interest reading materials and authentic Chinese learning resources that are most urgently needed but difficult to obtain in an L2 or L1 context. These resources are not only limited in quantity but, more importantly, in their relevancy to the Chinese American experience.

The findings from this study suggest that Chinese-dominant parents should tap into their own resources to expose children to as much conversational and written Chinese as possible. For example, parents should encourage their children to speak Chinese with family members and peers, make a variety of high-interest Chinese reading materials available, read Chinese storybooks to children as often as possible, and make use of environmental print such as Chinese newspapers, magazines, road signs, and restaurant menus to allow children to observe the use of Chinese literacy in meaningful and socially important ways. Chinese literacy could be further developed if children found their literacy experiences meaningful and validating. Furthermore, for English-dominant parents, if they are limited in their Chinese-language ability, they should consider eliciting help from grandparents or other family members who are fluent in Chinese to provide children with exposure to oral and written Chinese. English-dominant parents should also consider providing their children with Chinese books and books on tape. Children could listen to and read stories without relying on their parents. Furthermore, English-dominant parents can learn Chinese with their children.

The implications of this study for community Chinese heritage language programs in general, and for Chinese-English bilingual schools in particular, are that schools need to work in concert with parents to establish more effective home-school partnerships to meet the different language needs and

expectations of the parents and students coming from a spectrum of Chinese American families and to provide students with the necessary language and literacy experiences in a meaningful way. L1 maintenance and development cannot be achieved without a strong commitment from the parents. Perhaps schools need to consider developing family literacy programs in Chinese to involve parents in their children's literacy learning and to inform parents about ways of assisting their children in learning Chinese. Schools could also provide parents with a variety of Chinese reading materials and resources that parents could use at home with their children. Children benefit from the guidance of adults with higher levels of literacy who can expose them to L1 literacy activities and apprentice them in the uses of the language (Smith, 1988; Vygotsky, 1978). It would also be very beneficial to create supportive frameworks such as a Chinese as a Second Language program for parents; this would help parents improve their Chinese, which in turn would foster children's L1 language and literacy at home.

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Appendix

Chinese Bilingual Education Survey for Parents

S

Purpose of this surveys to explore parents perception of bilingual education and reasons they enroll their children in Chinese bilingual school. This survey is part of a research project of San Francisco State University. Data provided will be kept strictly confidential and will be used for this study only. Thank you in advance for your support of this research.

TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT YOUR FAMILY

Who lives in your home? Number of parents children Person completing the survey: Mother Father

Which schools are your children attending?

	Wah-Mei	or	Current School	Is he/she a Wah-Mei alumni?
Child 1	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Child 2	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Child 3	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Language	You	Your Spouse
What are your native, second, and/or third languages?	Native: <input type="text"/> Second: <input type="text"/> Third: <input type="text"/>	Native: <input type="text"/> Second: <input type="text"/> Third: <input type="text"/>
What Chinese dialects can you speak?	<input type="checkbox"/> Cantonese <input type="checkbox"/> Taiwanese <input type="checkbox"/> Mandarin <input type="checkbox"/> Tai Shan <input type="checkbox"/> Chao Zhou <input type="checkbox"/> Others <input type="checkbox"/> Hakka <input type="checkbox"/> Fu zhou	<input type="checkbox"/> Cantonese <input type="checkbox"/> Taiwanese <input type="checkbox"/> Mandarin <input type="checkbox"/> Tai Shan <input type="checkbox"/> Chao Zhou <input type="checkbox"/> Others <input type="checkbox"/> Hakka <input type="checkbox"/> Fu zhou
Chinese Proficiency?	Speaking: very fluent <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> very poor Reading : very well <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> very poor Writing : very well <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> very poor	Speaking: very fluent <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> very poor Reading : very well <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> very poor Writing : very well <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> very poor
English Proficiency?	Speaking: very fluent <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> very poor Reading : very well <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> very poor Writing : very well <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> very poor	Speaking: very fluent <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> very poor Reading : very well <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> very poor Writing : very well <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> very poor
Language spoken (from parents) to children at home?	<input type="radio"/> English <input type="radio"/> Chinese <input type="radio"/> Mostly English and some Chinese <input type="radio"/> Mostly Chinese and some English <input type="radio"/> Other language	<input type="radio"/> English <input type="radio"/> Chinese <input type="radio"/> Mostly English and some Chinese <input type="radio"/> Mostly Chinese and some English <input type="radio"/> Other language
Language parents encourage children to speak at home?	<input type="radio"/> English <input type="radio"/> Chinese <input type="radio"/> Both English and Chinese <input type="radio"/> Other language	<input type="radio"/> English <input type="radio"/> Chinese <input type="radio"/> Both English and Chinese <input type="radio"/> Other language
Language spoken between children at home?	<input type="radio"/> English <input type="radio"/> Chinese <input type="radio"/> Mostly English and some Chinese <input type="radio"/> Mostly Chinese and some English <input type="radio"/> Other language <input type="radio"/> N/A	

Your opinion about bilingual education													
The goal of bilingual education is to develop both academic English and heritage language.	<input type="radio"/> Agree <input type="radio"/> Disagree <input type="radio"/> Not sure												
Learning subject matter in the first language helps second language students learn subject matter better when he/she studies them in second language.	<input type="radio"/> Agree <input type="radio"/> Disagree <input type="radio"/> Not sure												
If students develop literacy in the first language, it will facilitate the development of reading and writing in the second language.	<input type="radio"/> Agree <input type="radio"/> Disagree <input type="radio"/> Not sure												
If a student is proficient in both first and second language, he/she should be enrolled in a classroom where the first language is part of the curriculum.	<input type="radio"/> Agree <input type="radio"/> Disagree <input type="radio"/> Not sure												
If a second language learner is placed in English only classes, he/she will learn English better and faster.	<input type="radio"/> Agree <input type="radio"/> Disagree <input type="radio"/> Not sure												
Students must learn English as quickly as possible; therefore, there is no need to develop the first language in school.	<input type="radio"/> Agree <input type="radio"/> Disagree <input type="radio"/> Not sure												
What types of schools would you like your children to attend? <i>check all that apply</i>	<table border="0"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th style="text-align: center;">Chinese Bilingual</th> <th style="text-align: center;">Mainstream (American)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Elementary School</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="radio"/></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="radio"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Middle School</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="radio"/></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="radio"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>High School</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="radio"/></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="radio"/></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Chinese Bilingual	Mainstream (American)	Elementary School	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Middle School	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	High School	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	Chinese Bilingual	Mainstream (American)											
Elementary School	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>											
Middle School	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>											
High School	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>											
Will you send your children to Chinese after-school program for the purpose of enhancing their Chinese?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No												
What kind of Chinese proficiency do you expect your children to achieve?	<input type="radio"/> Conversational fluency <input type="radio"/> Being able to read and write at elementary school level <input type="radio"/> Being able to read and write at middle school level <input type="radio"/> Being able to read and write at high school level												
<p>Why do you choose Chinese bilingual school for your children? <i>(check all that apply)</i></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Chinese is my child's stronger language, bilingual education (BE) eases the transition. <input type="checkbox"/> English is my child's stronger language, BE enhances the opportunity of becoming Chinese/English bilingual. <input type="checkbox"/> Chinese development can facilitate communication with elders. <input type="checkbox"/> Chinese development can facilitate communication with Chinese-speaking community. <input type="checkbox"/> My child can develop a positive self-image <input type="checkbox"/> I believe high level of bilingualism can result in superior cognitive development. <input type="checkbox"/> I believe high level of bilingualism can provide better career opportunities.	<input type="checkbox"/> Others: <i>please specify</i> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 150px; margin-top: 5px;"></div>												

Print/Media Environment	
How many English children-books do you have at home?	<input type="radio"/> None <input type="radio"/> 1-20 <input type="radio"/> 21-40 <input type="radio"/> 41-60 <input type="radio"/> 61-80 <input type="radio"/> More than 80
How many Chinese children-books do you have at home?	<input type="radio"/> None <input type="radio"/> 1-20 <input type="radio"/> 21-40 <input type="radio"/> 41-60 <input type="radio"/> 61-80 <input type="radio"/> More than 80
When you read for pleasure, you read books and/or magazine/newspaper in	<input type="radio"/> English <input type="radio"/> Chinese <input type="radio"/> Mostly English and some Chinese <input type="radio"/> Mostly Chinese and some English <input type="radio"/> Other language
How often do you read story in English to your children?	<input type="radio"/> Almost everyday <input type="radio"/> Occasionally <input type="radio"/> Rarely <input type="radio"/> Never
How often do you read story in Chinese to your children?	<input type="radio"/> Almost everyday <input type="radio"/> Occasionally <input type="radio"/> Rarely <input type="radio"/> Never
How often do your children watch TV program and/or movie in English per day?	<input type="radio"/> Never <input type="radio"/> 1-2 hours <input type="radio"/> 2-4 hours <input type="radio"/> More than 4 hours
How often do your children watch TV program and/or movie in Chinese per day?	<input type="radio"/> Never <input type="radio"/> 1-2 hours <input type="radio"/> 2-4 hours <input type="radio"/> More than 4 hours
How often do your children sing "karaoke" Chinese songs per day?	<input type="radio"/> Never <input type="radio"/> 1-2 hours <input type="radio"/> 2-4 hours <input type="radio"/> More than 4 hours
Do you take your children to the library?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
Children's book you check out from the library are in	<input type="radio"/> English <input type="radio"/> Chinese <input type="radio"/> Mostly English and some Chinese <input type="radio"/> Mostly Chinese and some English <input type="radio"/> Other language <input type="radio"/> N/A

Demographic Information	You	Your Spouse
Birth Place:	<input type="text" value=""/>	<input type="text" value=""/>
How many years have you been living in the US?	<input type="radio"/> Less than 1 year <input type="radio"/> 1-3 years <input type="radio"/> 4-6 years <input type="radio"/> 7-10 years <input type="radio"/> More than 10 years	<input type="radio"/> Less than 1 year <input type="radio"/> 1-3 years <input type="radio"/> 4-6 years <input type="radio"/> 7-10 years <input type="radio"/> More than 10 years
Highest Level of Education:	<input type="text" value=""/>	<input type="text" value=""/>
Individual Yearly Income:	<input type="radio"/> None <input type="radio"/> Less than \$10,000 <input type="radio"/> \$10,000-\$20,000 <input type="radio"/> \$20,001-\$30,000 <input type="radio"/> \$30,001-\$40,000 <input type="radio"/> \$40,001-\$50,000 <input type="radio"/> \$50,001-\$60,000 <input type="radio"/> More than \$60,000	<input type="radio"/> None <input type="radio"/> Less than \$10,000 <input type="radio"/> \$10,000-\$20,000 <input type="radio"/> \$20,001-\$30,000 <input type="radio"/> \$30,001-\$40,000 <input type="radio"/> \$40,001-\$50,000 <input type="radio"/> \$50,001-\$60,000 <input type="radio"/> More than \$60,000

If you have comments, suggestions, or would like to share a more detailed account of your children becoming Chinese bilingual (methods used, successes, failures, etc.), please enter here:

Finally, it would be highly appreciated if you could leave us your contact information (optional) for possible follow-up study and, if possible, help us to forward this web-page to parents who have/had children in Chinese bilingual program.

Email/Tel.:

Thank you for completing this survey and your support for Chinese bilingual education!

