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Heritage Language learning for Chinese Australians: the role of habitus

Abstract

The relationship between Heritage Language and ethnic identity has gained significant research ground in social psychological and poststructural scholarship, with empirical evidence largely emerging from the North American settings. There is little pertinent sociological work conducted outside North America. To fill this gap, this sociological study sets its scene in an Australian context. Drawing on Bourdieu's notion of habitus, the study examines the contribution of Chinese Australians' Chineseness to their Chinese Heritage Language proficiency. Two hundred and thirty young Chinese Australians completed the online survey. Results from multiple regression indicate that habitus of Chineseness is one of the significant predictors for the Chinese Heritage Language proficiency of these young people. The study makes a theoretical contribution to investigate ethnic identity – Heritage Language link through the notion of habitus and makes a methodological contribution to quantify this habitus.

Keywords: Chineseness; Chinese Heritage Language; identity; habitus; Bourdieu

Introduction

Heritage Language and its speakers' ethnic identity have received increasing scholarly attention. In English-speaking countries, Heritage Language (HL) denotes a language other than English that is associated with one's cultural background (Chinen and Tucker 2005, Cho, Cho, and Tse 1997). Ethnic identity refers to the nominal identification of a sameness of a nation of people (You 2005), the feelings and attitudes that accompany this sense of group membership (Phinney 1990), and the depth of commitment to certain shared patterns of communication, underlying beliefs, and philosophy of life within this particular cultural group (Ting-Toomey 1981). The co-construction of ethnic identity and HL proficiency has been investigated from social psychological and poststructural literature, with empirical evidence largely emerging from the North American contexts. However, there is a paucity of sociological examination of the ethnic identity – HL proficiency link beyond the North American boundary. In Australia, where Chinese is a demographically significant group, there is limited, if any, sociological work discussing the relationship between Chinese ethnic identity and Chinese Heritage Language (CHL) learning. Quantitative evidence of this relationship regarding Chinese Australians is largely absent in the literature. The research reported in this paper aims to make a contribution in this regard.

The paper is developed in several stages. The author firstly reviews the literature in Chinese heritage research, with a particular focus on the ethnic identity – CHL link. To complement the extant literature, the author then draws on Bourdieu's sociological notion of habitus, interprets Chineseness as ethnic identity, and links this Chineseness to the CHL proficiency of Chinese Australians. Next, the author uses data produced through a large-scale survey to justify this link. This is followed by a succinct discussion of the results and implications for future research.

Literature review

In heritage studies, there is a steady stream of research concerned with Chinese Heritage Language Learners (CHLLs). The immanent relationship between these learners' ethnic identity and their CHL proficiency has been the object of extensive scholarly treatment in different camps of scholarship, predominantly in social psychological and poststructural schools.

The social psychological scholarship largely adopts a quantitative approach to examine the mutually constitutive effect between CHLLs' self-identification and their CHL learning. In the United States, young Chinese American adults' CHL proficiency was found to be positively related to their sense of belongingness to Chinese ethnic group, their perceptions of the meanings attached to this membership, and their exploration of Chinese history and culture (Kiang 2008). Similarly, Chinese American adolescents' CHL proficiency was found to be correlated with their strength of ethnic identity; and their CHL proficiency seemed to be more important than their choice of CHL usage for ethnic identity (Oh and Fuligni 2010). Findings from Canadian research are consistent with those from American studies. Canadian university students of Chinese ancestry reported that they were learning CHL because it was an integral aspect of their self-concept; the more they integrated CHL learning into their being, the more they were motivated to learn the language, and the more they considered their Chinese ethnicity central to their sense of self (Comanaru and Noels 2009). In an earlier study (Feuerverger 1991), Chinese Canadian students were included in a large sample of HL learners studying their HL in Canadian universities. Their CHL was found to be relevant to the desire of participation in their ethnic community, the sense of connection to their ethnic homeland, and the motivation to be integrated into their ethnic culture. Since classical social psychological models emphasise on how individual CHLLs identify themselves, as well as how CHL helps to inform such self-identifications, these models tend to view the interrelation between ethnic identity construction and CHL learning through an internal, linear, and finite process. Consequently, the classical social psychological scholarship oversimplifies CHLLs' life trajectories in relation to their CHL learning and ethnic identity construction.

In contrast, findings from some qualitative studies challenge the social psychological understanding of ethnic identity as the individual trait of CHLLs. Chao (1997) reported that Chinese Americans' cultural identities shifted along the process of their CHL learning, from their teenage years' desire to be integrated into American culture and English-speaking community to the gradual awareness of CHL learning as an undeniable part of their Chinese heritage in their young adulthood. This indicated that Chinese Americans' "ethno-racial identity" and their "native tongue" (Chao 1997, 8) were entangled through an ongoing and shifting process. He (2006) found that Chinese Americans studied their CHL to re-establish either similarities with ethnic Chinese members or differences from members of mainstream American culture, and that they were committed not merely to inheriting their CHL and maintaining their Chinese cultural identity but also to transforming their CHL and recreating their identity. This indicated that CHLLs' identity construction through CHL learning across time and space is a socialisation process with multiple agencies, directions, and goals. Wong and Xiao's (2010) study of Chinese Americans from Chinese dialect backgrounds offered a glimpse into the complex identities of CHLLs, from bridging imagined communities and

overcoming linguistic hegemony to expanding language investment. Ang (2001) discussed the predicaments of Chineseness in diaspora. The starting point of her discussion was the experience of her first trip to China. Though of Chinese descent, she was different because she could not speak Chinese. She failed to legitimise her Chineseness because ‘not speaking Chinese’ did not give her a recognised identity as a ‘real’ Chinese. To tackle the sense of alienation that took hold of her, she contended that ‘not speaking Chinese’ can cease being a problem for overseas Chinese in diasporic contexts. In other words, diasporic Chineseness cannot be envisioned in any unified or homogeneous way. Rather, it is a diverse, heterogeneous, and ultimately precarious hybridity. Different to the classical social psychological thesis, these studies conceptualise Chinese identity as contradictory, multiple, and fluid, contextually embedded and constructed through CHL learning. In this respect, much of this work falls into the school of poststructuralism.

However, the poststructuralist concept of multiple identities without foundational basis has its limitations (Luke 2009). The assumption that human identity is wholly malleable and that the body can be styled to assume an invented identity runs into problems when faced with the durability of human beings’ internal schemata (Luke 2009). The body does remember so that human beings remain in many ways the products of kinship and blood (Luke 2009). As suggested by the social psychological literature, embodied propensities and inclinations can stay with CHLLs so that the relationship between their ethnic identity and CHL proficiency can be predictable. At the same time, CHLLs’ ways of thinking, being, and doing are shaped, reshaped, and socially constructed, as evident in the poststructural literature, so that the relationship between their ethnic identity and CHL proficiency is contingent on external conditions. In summary, both social psychological and poststructural schools offer meaningful insights into the relationship between ethnic identity and CHL, while they inevitably receive critiques from other perspectives. To reconcile the tensions between the social psychological ‘inside-out’ approach and the poststructural ‘outside-in’ approach, the current study counts on Bourdieu’s sociological notion of habitus as a theoretical tool to investigate the role played by habitus of Chineseness in CHL learning.

Habitus of Chineseness

Habitus denotes “systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures” (Bourdieu 1977, 72). To clarify, habitus is a set of embodied dispositions that serve as principles to structure representations. Its continuity comes to shape internal attitudes, values, perceptions, and dispositions. Moreover, habitus can be understood as “a subjective but not individual system of internalised structures, schemes of perception, conception, and action common to all members of the same group” (Bourdieu 1977, 86). This sameness within a group indicates Bourdieu’s interpretation of identity through habitus. Ascribed identities, such as race, ethnicity, and HL, are not of people’s own choice, and therefore they remain an embodied presence and cannot be erased. Habitus is the tendency to perpetuate these attributes (Bourdieu 1996). As a foundational basis for these attributes, habitus offers an opportunity to examine the relationship between practices and identities (Pahl 2008). In line with this perspective, Costello (2005) uses the

notion of habitus to explicate how identity affects cognitive style as well as embodied deportment. Similarly, Holland et al. (1998) emphasise the production and transformation of habitus, seeing it as a fundamental but not final or given aspect of identity construction. Likewise, Bartlett and Holland (2002) use the concept of habitus as a way of describing and analysing identity formation in practice. In brief, there is often an interplay between habitus and identity practices (Rowse 2008). Identity draws upon and reflects habitus (Zacher 2008). Habitus, in this way, comes to generate identity (Rowse 2008).

One of the ways that make sense of ethnic identity has also been through Bourdieu's notion of habitus. Connolly (2011) demonstrates how children have already begun to embody and internalise the cultural propensities and the ethnic awareness of their respective ethnic groups. These embodied dispositions of the ethnic groups, such as affiliated cultural, experiential, and historical memories, may not stem from their own conscious choice, and may largely remain durable and transposable across different times and places in their lives (Luke 2009, Webb, Schirato, and Danaher 2002). As such, ethnic and racial dimensions are constitutive of habitus (Diamond, Randolph, and Spillane 2004, Horvat and Antonio 1999, Cockerham and Hinote 2009) and habitus can be shaped by these ethnic and racial dimensions (Reay 2004, McClelland 1990). In short, the construction of ethnic identity makes sense through habitus. Following this route, this paper examines Chinese Australians' Chineseness with reference to Bourdieu's concept of habitus and interprets their Chineseness as a set of durable and transposable tendencies to think and act in such a way that has been inculcated by their Chinese heritage, cultural history, and ancestral roots. This habitus of Chineseness represents a system of dispositions embodied in Chinese Australians' shared tastes, behaviors, values, and way of life.

Habitus works on "the basis of the premises established in the previous state" (Bourdieu 2000, 161). The previous state integrates past experiences and functions at every moment as a matrix of dispositions, which generates infinitely diversified practices (Bourdieu 1977). This is made possible by habitus acquired through culture (Bourdieu 1989) and produced through history (Bourdieu 1990, Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). Confucianism can therefore be understood to constitute a cultural history or "previous state" for Chineseness, because it is the bedrock, even the definitive core, of Chinese culture (Tan 2008). Since Confucianism is deeply rooted in Chinese societies and highly valued in the Chinese social fields, it has become a generative mechanism behind Chinese people's thinking, being, and doing. In this respect, "history turned into nature" (Bourdieu 1977, 78) because what historically needed to be durable and transposable through a process of continuous reproduction is now inscribed through social regulations, forms, and norms.

Agents are endowed with durable cognitive structures and a dispositional sense of action that direct them to appropriate responses to given situations (Bourdieu 1998). Habitus captures how agents carry their culture, experience, and history within themselves, and how they make choices to act in certain ways rather than in others. As a system of dispositions to certain practice, habitus constructs an objective basis for regular modes of behavior (Bourdieu 1994). These modes of behavior can be predicted by virtue of the effect of the habitus because agents who are equipped with it will behave in a certain way in certain circumstances (Bourdieu 1994). Specifically, Bourdieu (1991) theorises that people make choices about

languages according to the habitus they have. This argument contends that habitus is the generative basis for language practices. Accordingly, the study investigates the contribution of Chinese Australians' Chineseness to their CHL proficiency.

The study

Different from the bulk of the extant studies conducted in the North America, the current study sets its scene in Australia, an idiosyncratic cultural and social place for Chinese Australians, their ancestors and descendants. The 'gold-rush' age saw the agitation of European diggers towards Chinese diggers due to the lure of gold and the competition in gold mining. This agitation resulted in restrictive anti-Chinese legislation in the late 1850s and the early 1860s. Later, the so-called 'White Australia Policy' promulgated in 1901 constructed the legal basis for the racial superiority of 'whiteness' over 'Chineseness' and other 'colourness'. Nevertheless, the dismantlement of the White Australia Policy in the late 1970s saw the arrival of multiculturalism in Australia. Furthermore, the *2012 Australia in the Asian Century White Paper* (Australian Government 2012) increased the linguistic value of Chinese language and favoured the cultural identity of Chineseness. In brief, Australia is a complex social place for Chinese Australians who firstly suffered from the potholes and distractions brought by the historical discrimination against their Chineseness, and then enjoyed, consciously or unconsciously, the rejuvenation of this Chineseness brought by the multicultural ideology.

For Chinese Australians, their habitus of Chineseness is rooted in the Confucian cultural history but shaped by the ongoing social conditions. In this vein, it is durable and transposable but not immutable. To understand how this structured and structuring habitus of Chineseness impact CHL, the current study makes an attempt to measure the internal attitudes towards Chineseness and CHL proficiency and then investigates the role played by this Chineseness in the CHL proficiency of Chinese Australians.

Instrument development

Habitus is a nebulous concept and difficult to measure in empirical research (Sullivan 2002). Despite this challenge, existing studies have attempted to quantify habitus. Cockerham and Hinote (2009) suggested that measures of collectivities can be especially useful to quantify habitus, where collectivities refer to collections of agents linked together through particular social relationships and shared norms, values, ideals, and social perspectives. In particular, religion and ideology are examples of these collective perspectives (Cockerham 2005). Since Confucianism can be understood as a Chinese quasi-religious and ideological system, Ho et al. (2012) have made an attempt to compile a pool of items to measure Chinese collective perspectives by consulting Confucian classics and sayings associated with Confucianism. Informed by these scholars, the author operationalised Chinese Australians' habitus of Chineseness according to key dimensions of Confucian norms, values, ideals, and social perspectives. This approach is in line with the notion of habitus because it unveils the present dispositions that are rooted in the Confucian cultural history while shaped by the current external structures. In this way, nine indicators were developed to quantify Chineseness.

To gauge CHL proficiency, a self-reporting strategy was used. This is a common approach to measuring subject achievement in large-scale survey research, particularly when direct testing is logistically difficult. There are contrasting views on this approach. On the one hand, the meta-analysis conducted by Kuncel, Credé and Thomas (2005) challenged the accuracy of self-reported academic grades, ranks and test scores. On the other hand, many other studies have found self-reported subject achievement to be remarkably consistent with actual achievement (Anaya 1999, Cassady 2001, Cole and Gonyea 2010). In particular, self-reporting measures of language proficiency have been found to correlate highly with direct measures of language ability (Oh and Fuligni 2010). Given this, nine items that asked participants to self-report Mandarin listening, speaking, reading and writing skills were developed as a proxy measure of their CHL proficiency. Mandarin proficiency was of particular interest because of its increasing value in various linguistic fields (Mu 2013), Australia in particular (Tasker 2012).

A 7-point uni-polar Likert-type scale was used as a proxy interval level of measurement in line with common practice in educational research (Lehman 1991, Tabachnick and Fidell 2007). The scale ranged from 1 (not at all) to 7 (completely). In the pilot phase, the scales for Chineseness and CHL proficiency were improved through extensive discussions with Chinese language teachers and scholars, feedback from five young Chinese Australians, and Cronbach's α test with 38 young Chinese Australians. In this way, scale items were shaped and reshaped into nine indicators for Chineseness (Cronbach's $\alpha = .91$) and four indicators for CHL proficiency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .93$). These indicators were reported in the Appendix.

Participants

Given the impossibility of using the probability sampling strategies, the current study distributed the link to the online survey through snowball sampling, which is widely used in heritage research (Gibbs and Hines 1992, Hall 1992, Pao, Wong, and Teuben-Rowe 1997, Root 1992, Kiang 2008). In this way, 230 young Chinese Australian participants, ranging in age between 18 and 35, were approached. To the best of the author's knowledge and belief, this is the largest national sample of Chinese Australians to date. This sample demonstrated diverse demographic features. The sample consisted of 47.8% men and 52.2% women. One hundred and eleven participants were born outside Australia, with 95 born in China (the Chinese Mainland, Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan) and 16 born in other countries (Indonesia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore, and Vietnam). Their age of immigration ranged between nine months and 13 years old – an age range consistent with the literature (Bhatti 2002, Mu 2013, Zhang 2009) for the first-generation immigrants to be considered as HL speakers. The Australian-born group consisted of 119 participants, including 73, 31, and 15 participants of second-generation, third-generation, and fourth-generation or further removed respectively. Participants reportedly used a variety of languages at home, including English, Mandarin, Cantonese, other Chinese dialects, Indonesian, Vietnamese, or a mixture of these languages. Their formal CHL learning varied in years from zero to 15.

Data analysis and results

Data were analysed, reported, and discussed in several stages. The initial Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) were used to validate the instrument.

This was followed by the regression analysis to enable a sharp focus on the problems under examination.

Firstly, the statistical basis to run EFA was examined. EFA was run on 13 indicators – four indicators for CHL proficiency and nine indicators for Chineseness. No correlation coefficient between any two indicators of the 13 indicators was found below the cut-off value of .30 (Tabachnick and Fidell 2007, Field 2009). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was .93, higher than the cut-off value of .50 (Kaiser 1974). Bartlett's test of sphericity (Bartlett 1954) yielded a significant result ($p < .001$). These measures indicated sufficient strength of the intercorrelations amongst the indicators, and therefore suggested the statistical basis to run EFA.

Secondly, the underlying factors behind the 13 indicators were identified through the principal components analysis, the most commonly used approach for factor extraction (Pallant 2007, Field 2009). Kaiser's eigenvalue-above-one criterion (Kaiser 1960), Cattell's scree test of the inflexion point (Cattell 1966), and Horn's parallel analysis (Horn 1965) all suggested to retain two factors. Oblique rotation approach was used because of the assumption that the two underlying factors were correlated (Tabachnick and Fidell 2007, Field 2009). The first factor was composed of nine indicators for Chineseness, accounting for 55.42% of the variance of all indicators. The second factor consisted of four indicators for CHL proficiency, accounting for another 10.00% of the variance of all indicators.

Next, CFA was used. A single-factor measurement model for CHL proficiency was specified as a latent variable with four indicators, each of which measured CHL listening, speaking, reading, and writing respectively. The model fitted well ($\chi^2 = 1.17, p = .557$; the incremental model fit measures NFI/RFI/IFI/TLI/CFI > 0.90 , RMSEA $< .001$). The reliability of the model was considered high (Cronbach's $\alpha = .93$, SMCs $> .50$, construct reliability (Fornell and Larcker 1981) = .77, variance extracted = 82.56%, coefficient H (Hancock and Mueller 2001) = .95). Regarding validity, the unidimensionality of the indicators and the significant critical ratios of the unstandardised regression weights of these indicators supported the claim for the model's construct validity and convergent validity respectively. In accord with Rowe (2002), the scale score for the overall CHL proficiency was computed as a continuous variable by multiplying the individual's raw score on CHL listening, speaking, reading and writing by the proportionally weighted factor score of each indicator respectively and summing. Taking account of individual and joint measurement error, this approach ensures that the estimates of the scale score for the overall CHL proficiency are proportionally weighted by the actual contribution made by each indicator, that is, each CHL skill.

Similarly, a single-factor measurement model for Chineseness with nine indicators was validated. The model presented a reasonable level of fit (NFI/RFI/IFI/TLI/CFI > 0.90 ; RMSEA = .08). The reliability of the model was considered good (Cronbach's $\alpha = .91$, six out of nine SMCs $> .50$, construct reliability = .52, variance extracted = 57.18%, coefficient H = .91). The construct validity of the model can be claimed by virtue of the unidimensionality of the indicators and the convergent validity can be claimed given the significant critical ratios of the unstandardised regression weights of these indicators. The scale score for Chineseness was calculated according to the proportionally weighted contribution made by each indicator.

Finally, regression analysis was used to predict the variance of CHL proficiency. To unveil the complexities of Chinese Australians' CHL learning, both Chineseness and selected demographic variables were treated as predictors for CHL proficiency. The demographic variables were language usage at home, place of birth, years of formal CHL learning, and generation. Language usage at home and place of birth were transformed into quantitative variables according to Mu's (2013) hierarchy of the legitimate value of different languages in different linguistic market. Language usage at home was coded as from 1 (English only, non-Chinese language only, or a mixed use of these), through 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 with a growing usage of Mandarin, to 7 (Mandarin only). Place of birth was coded as from 1 (Indonesia, where Chinese language traditionally accrued negative value) to 7 (the Chinese Mainland, where Chinese accrued higher value).

Given the conceptual interest of the current research, a hierarchical regression was performed by entering the construct of Chineseness firstly and the demographic variables subsequently. As indicated in Table 1, Chineseness was found to be a significant contributor to CHL proficiency. When Chineseness firstly entered the model, 44% of the variance of CHL proficiency was explained. When demographic variables were added into the model, they made a further significant contribution by explaining another 20% of the variance of CHL proficiency. In total, 64% of the variance of CHL proficiency has been explained by the predictors in the regression model.

Table 1. Variance explained by the predictors

Model	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	Adjusted <i>R</i> ²	<i>R</i> ² change	<i>F</i> change	<i>df</i> 1	<i>df</i> 2	<i>p</i> of <i>F</i> change	Durbin-Watson
1	.66 ^a	.44	.44	.44	179.56	1	228	<.001	
2	.80 ^b	.64	.64	.20	32.01	4	224	<.001	1.93

a. Predictors: (constant), Chineseness

b. Predictors: (constant), Chineseness, language usage at home, years of formal CHL learning, place of birth, generation

Nevertheless, only three significant predictors were retained when a stepwise regression was performed. Although the stepwise regression counts on the mathematical criterion and takes methodological decisions out of the hands of the researcher, it is particularly useful for an exploratory model building (Field 2009). In this vein, it helped the current research to explore the significant predictors for CHL proficiency. As indicated in Table 2, these significant predictors are: Chineseness, language usage at home, and years of formal CHL learning. As evident in the data, Chineseness played an important role in CHL proficiency.

Table 2. Significant predictors for CHL proficiency

Predictors	Unstandardised		Std. Beta	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Collinearity statistics	
	Beta	SE. B				Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	.10	.25		.41	.684		
Language usage at home	.54	.08	.40	7.02	<.001	.48	2.08
Years of formal CHL learning	.08	.02	.16	3.43	.001	.73	1.37
Chineseness	.45	.07	.34	6.82	<.001	.65	1.54

Discussion

Of all the predictors for CHL proficiency, place of birth and generation were not significant. Interestingly, they were significantly correlated with CHL proficiency. Participants born in places where Mandarin has more legitimate value (Mu 2013) tended to have higher CHL proficiency than those born in places where Mandarin is less valued ($\tau = .40, p < .001$), while later generations tended to have lower CHL proficiency than early generations ($\tau = -.45, p < .001$). However, place of birth and generation became less powerful at the presence of other demographic variables. This result is informative. Chinese Australians were born into a particular place and a certain generation. These identities were given rather than chosen. Compared with place of birth and generation, particular language usage patterns at home and certain years of formal CHL learning can be choices either made by Chinese Australians themselves or imposed on them by their parents. In this respect, it is the agentive commitment not the static structure that comes to shape CHL practices.

Unlike these demographic variables, Chineseness is very unique. As a habitus, this Chineseness was both born and chosen. On the one hand, participants were born into a Chinese cultural history deeply rooted in Confucianism. Structured by the habitus, certain dispositions of Chineseness cannot be erased or made over and therefore stay durable and transposable. On the other hand, participants internalise basic dimensions of external conditions in their social lives, which, in turn, comes to shape their internal attitudes, values, perceptions, and dispositions that are structuring the habitus. This habitus, though durable and transposable, is not immutable. Instead, it is an open system of dispositions, “constantly subjected to experiences, and therefore constantly affected by them in a way that either reinforces or modifies its structures” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 133). Chinese Australians are “open to the world, and therefore exposed to the world, and so capable of being conditioned by the world, shaped by the material and cultural conditions of existence” (Bourdieu 2000, 134). Accordingly, dispositions, knowledge, and values associated with Chineseness are always potentially subject to modification, rather than being passively consumed or reinscribed. This is reflected in the data – participants reported different levels of attitudes towards Confucian dispositions ($M = 4.18, SD = 1.38$). In other words, different individual Chinese Australians capture or recapture dispositions of Chineseness at various levels in different contexts according to the social structures that they have internalised. Therefore, they will produce diverse forms of practices in relation to their CHL learning that ultimately lead to their different levels of CHL proficiency ($M = 4.21, SD = 1.84$).

Chinese Australians’ Chineseness serves as an underpinning mechanism for CHL learning. However, this mechanism is generative but not decisive. The current regression model has explained 64% of the variance of CHL proficiency, with 44% explained by Chineseness. Bourdieu’s sociology may offer a theoretical framework for future examination of the remaining 36% of the variance of CHL proficiency. According to Bourdieu (1989), routine behaviors and patterned sociocultural activities in which agents engage (practices) result from their dispositions (habitus) and their social resources (capital), within the current state of play of a particular social arena (field). In line with this Bourdieusian perspective, CHL learning, as a form of Chinese Australians’ social practice, not only results from their habitus of Chineseness, but also may be attributed to the quantity and quality of resources they possess,

in proportion to which their opportunities for successful CHL learning vary. These resources are what Bourdieu means by capital. Therefore, the remaining 36% of the variance of CHL proficiency may be (partly) attributed to various forms of capital invested by Chinese Australians. Given the limited space in the current paper, how Chinese Australians capitalise on various resources through CHL learning in a diversity of social fields will have to be addressed in future work.

Quantifying habitus: a methodological contribution

Much of the existing work attempting to use and apply Bourdieu's sociological theory has tended to be qualitative in approach (Connolly 2011). However, there is inevitably something missing by restricting the methodological focus to one mode of research when operating Bourdieu's theoretical package. In Bourdieu's original works, such as *Distinction* (Bourdieu 1989) and *The State of Nobility* (Bourdieu 1996), data were also quantitatively investigated by correspondence analysis. Though these data were mostly analysed by a descriptive and exploratory multidimensional scaling technique, Bourdieu was interested in tendency, prediction, and correlation based on these quantitative analyses. Following this route, this study has made an attempt to quantify Bourdieu's key notion of habitus, developing and validating a set of indicators to measure the habitus of Chineseness. Although the argument against quantifying habitus has been prevalent in the literature for a long time (Sullivan 2002), an increasing number of scholars (Cockerham and Hinote 2009, Dumais 2002, Cockerham 2005, McClelland 1990) have articulated less rigid views and advocated a methodological breakthrough. If habitus does represent the internalisation of broader social structures and does represent a set of dispositions that are manifest, to some extent, in particular ways of thinking and behaving, these wider patterns should be discernible and ultimately measurable at least to a certain degree. Given the increasing use of the concept of habitus in sociology, a quantitative methodology is needed to complement the prevailing qualitative approaches.

Conclusion

Habitus as the system of dispositions is a past that survives in the present and tends to perpetuate itself into the future (Bourdieu 1977). As habitus, Chineseness underpins a set of embodied dispositions associated with the Confucian way of doing, being, and thinking, durable with the passage of time and transposable with the changing of space. It is durable because the core Confucian values have an enduring impact on Chinese people today (Lee 1996) and Confucianism is the dynamic force that determines the direction and form of Chinese life (Tan 2008). Chinese Australians' Confucian deportment and manner are the products of their habitus of Chineseness, and therefore are dispositions individual, subject to, belonging to, and characteristic of themselves. As such, Chineseness is embodied and expressed through Confucian ways of "standing, speaking, walking, and thereby of feeling and thinking" (Bourdieu 1990, 70). This habitus of Chineseness is also transposable because Confucian perceptions, appreciations, and actions can be carried out and enacted not only by Chinese people living in China but also by overseas Chinese throughout the world, for

example, Chinese Australians in this study. Therefore, Chineseness is the bodily inscription of Chinese Australians' past, present, and future positions in the social structure that they carry with them, at all times and in all places.

Bourdieu (1991) theorises that people make choices about accent, vocabulary, and way of speaking according to the habitus they have. This study extended this theory to choices of a language from different languages. This was supported by the finding that Chinese Australians' Chineseness had a strong positive impact on their CHL proficiency. Their CHL proficiency is associated with their CHL practice. Their habitus of Chineseness is the immanent law laid down in them as the precondition for their CHL practices. As argued by Bourdieu (1977), habitus is the universalising mediation which causes agents' practices, without either explicit reason or signifying intent, to be none the less sensible and reasonable, and to be immediately intelligible and foreseeable, and hence taken for granted. When Chinese Australians have a stronger disposition of Chineseness, they tend to be more committed to learning their CHL, and therefore have a better CHL proficiency. As such, Chinese Australians' habitus of Chineseness captures how they make choices to act in certain ways rather than in others by virtue of their culture, experience, and history within themselves.

In summary, Chineseness is not a random or un-patterned structure but a systematically ordered one, comprising a set of embodied dispositions associated with Confucian values, which generate certain perceptions, appreciations, and practices for Chinese Australians. Chineseness is durable in that it lasts over time and transposable by being capable of becoming active within a wide variety of social worlds, and therefore functions as an enduring mechanism to generate Chinese Australians' CHL practices. However, this habitus of Chineseness is not immutable but changing constantly in response to new experiences. Therefore, Chinese Australians' habitus of Chineseness generates different CHL practices for different individuals in different contexts, resulting in their different levels of CHL proficiency. In brief, this paper justifies that Bourdieu's key concept of habitus offers a theoretical approach to examine the way that people of an ethnic group make choices regarding their HLs. By quantifying habitus of Chineseness, the paper also makes a methodological contribution: It complements the predominant qualitative use of Bourdieu's notion of habitus.

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Appendix: Items for the scales of Chineseness and CHL proficiency

Indicators for Chineseness

1. My mathematics was much better than that of my classmates. To what extent do you agree with this statement?
2. Handwriting tells you a lot about a person's character. To what extent do you agree with this statement?

3. Children must be taught to paint, dance, or play musical instruments. To what extent do you agree with this statement?
4. Academic education is the most important thing in school. To what extent do you agree with this statement?
5. I prefer to live close to my family members. To what extent do you agree with this statement?
6. I hope to have sons to continue my family line or my husband's family line. To what extent do you agree with this statement?
7. People who are senior in age and/or position should be addressed by their title plus surname rather than their first name. To what extent do you agree with this statement?
8. To save face I always prefer to say 'yes'. To what extent do you agree with this statement?
9. Confucianism values the virtue of frugality. Confucius said that frugality is a common character of people with virtue. He also said that frugality is very important in family life. In general, how much degree would you agree with these values?

Indicators for CHL proficiency

1. I can easily understand my family members and friends when they talk to me in Mandarin. To what extent do you agree with this statement?
2. I can easily handle complex situations in Mandarin, such as banking, arguing, purchasing a house or a car. To what extent do you agree with this statement?
3. I can read Mandarin textbooks easily. To what extent do you agree with this statement?
4. I can always write Mandarin characters and Mandarin words correctly. To what extent do you agree with this statement?