

Promoting Intercultural Competence in Chinese Heritage Language Education

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Taking the lens of intercultural competence, this article describes and analyzes classroom interactions in a Chinese heritage language (CHL) classroom in the U.S. to reflect how Chinese and American cultural values come into conflict and impact CHL classroom dynamics. The data were collected through participant-observations, audio-recorded classroom interactions, and an informal open-ended interview with the teacher. We found that power negotiations between the teacher and students often emerged. Additionally, although all students were Chinese heritage language students, how to act Chinese might not be understood and practiced by the students in the CHL classroom. This article thus raises an important issue: What guidelines should be followed in CHL classrooms when the target culture and mainstream culture come into conflict? We conclude with suggestions that rather than simply trying to disseminate Chinese culture, providing an explicit direction on culturally-expected classroom behaviors and developing both the teacher's and students' intercultural competence might be a good starting point. The goal of CHL education should aim at cultivating students' awareness of and empathy towards the belief/value systems in both cultures and ultimately their ability to make appropriate choices in daily interactions as effective bilingual users. Pedagogical implications and suggestions are discussed.

Due to a steady increase of the immigrant population in the United States, the number of heritage language schools has also been on a steady rise. Heritage language education is emerging as a new field (Brinton, Kagan, & Bauckus, 2008). Like other ethnic language schools (Japanese, Hebrew, German, etc.) in immigrant communities, Chinese heritage language (CHL) schools attempt to preserve the Chinese language and culture among second and succeeding Chinese generations. Thus, CHL schools offer hope for Chinese immigrant parents when Chinese English bilingual programs are not available in American K-12 mainstream schools; CHL classrooms are subsequently regarded as a place where Chinese American children can learn and maintain the Chinese language and culture.

As Chiang (2000) commented, "The experience of being Chinese in the American context has a profound impact on the retention of ethnic language" (p. viii). Chinese American children attend mainstream schools on weekdays where they are exposed to, and learn about, American mainstream values and socially-desirable behaviors and attend CHL schools on weekends. However, despite parents' strong desire to maintain the Chinese language and culture and CHL teachers' passion and commitment for teaching CHL students, Chinese American children have mixed attitudes towards CHL schools and Chinese language learning. In our observation, students' attitudes range from "I am a Chinese. I can speak Chinese, and my English is good too" to "I hate learning Chinese." Further, the differences

between American and Chinese cultures present Chinese American children with many choices in areas such as cultural practice, language use, and ways of perceiving and doing things (Phinney, Horenezyk, Liebkind, & Vedder, 2001).

To date, studies in CHL settings focus mainly on investigating language learning, language use, parents' attitudes, students' motivation, and identity construction, all of which are important in helping us understand the importance of CHL education (e.g., Lao, 2004; Li, 2005). However, few studies focus on investigating interactional conflicts in CHL classrooms and the cultural issues involved, although such conflicts have been reported in CHL studies (e.g., Chiang, 2000). Therefore, to fill the gap, this article provides practical views of CHL education through the lens of intercultural competence.

Intercultural Competence

Bloome (1986) claimed, "when people engage each other in face-to-face interaction, they need to construct a shared framework for how each other is to be understood and how they are to signal their intention" (p. 3). Intercultural competence, or cross-cultural competence, has been widely investigated in studies with foci such as: work/study abroad programs, international management, foreign language education, sojourner adaptation, and immigrants' cultural adaptation. We use the term "intercultural competence" in this article because, as cited by Yerushova, DeJaeghere, and Mestenhauser (2000), intercultural competence focuses more on the interaction of people with different cultural backgrounds than "cross-cultural competence," since it is usually used to compare multiple cultures (Asante & Gudykunst, 1989).

According to the Delphi questionnaire completed by leading intercultural experts, Deardorff (2006) developed the consensual definition of intercultural competence as "the ability of an individual to interact effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations, based on specific attitudes, intercultural knowledge, skills and reflection" (p. 254). Deardorff explained that in order to achieve intercultural competence, individuals need to develop: (1) an understanding and knowledge of culture, cultural self-awareness, and sociolinguistic awareness, (2) skills to observe, listen, interpret, analyze, evaluate, and relate, and (3) attitudes to respect cultural diversity, learn from other cultures, withholding judgment, and tolerate ambiguity and uncertainty. Furthermore, Mahoney, and Schamber (2004) argued that simply being exposed to different cultures does not make a person interculturally competent; a person must also possess the skills and ability to navigate cultural differences in intercultural situations.

Yeh, Okubo, Ma, Shea, Ou, and Pituc (2008) investigated the impact of factors such as English fluency on Chinese American high school students' intercultural competence as it relates to their cultural adjustment process. One finding indicated that the students who are more open to other cultural groups had fewer intercultural competence concerns. Moloney (2007) investigated the characteristics of intercultural competence in young language learners of an immersion language program in one Australian primary school. The author found that the understanding of language, culture, and identity was an important indicator for students to develop intercultural competence; meanwhile, the language teachers' behaviors and

understandings of culture might facilitate the development of learners' intercultural competence. Also, some students with intercultural competence were able to critically reflect on their (multiple) linguistic and cultural memberships, and to negotiate their identity as a non-native language user.

Yershova, DeJaeghere, and Mestenhauser (2000) argued that the teaching of intercultural competence to help individuals respond to cultural differences should be viewed through the developmental perspective instead of the fix-the-problem approach. Being interculturally competent means that individuals should view and manage cultural differences as an opportunity for learning and personal growth, rather than view those differences as a problem or a detrimental force to effective intercultural performance. Thus, intercultural experiences should become "an impetus to help individuals start developing an awareness of their internalized cultural programming to respond to cultural differences" (Yershova et al., 2000, p. 45).

In this study, we look through the lens of intercultural competence to explain the cultural conflicts that emerged in Chinese American students' classroom interactions with their CHL teacher; we also explore ways to help CHL teachers and students develop intercultural awareness and pedagogical approaches to respond to cultural conflicts in CHL classrooms.

Childrearing, Learning, and Teaching in Chinese Tradition

To better understand interactions among the CHL teacher and students and cultural practices in class, we think it is important to provide an overview of Chinese culture relevant to teaching and learning. In the Chinese culture, Confucian principles have a significant impact on Chinese family interactions and relationships. Definitive views on parental control, obedience, strict discipline, emphasis on education, filial piety, respect for the elder, care for the younger, family obligations, reverence for tradition, maintenance of harmony, and negation of conflict are attributed to the influence of Confucianism (Chao, 1983). Traditionally, moral education includes teaching how to relate to other people in society and cultivating moral virtues such as loyalty, fidelity, altruism, modesty, and conformity—that is, how to be a good person (Paine, 1992). This emphasis on moral development is still considered the basis of successful education for Chinese students (Cheng, 1994).

In addition, according to Chinese traditions in the classroom, a teacher's role is equivalent to that of one's parents. It is said that "a teacher for one day; a father forever (一日为师, 终身为父)." Under this principle, teachers share the same norms (e.g., strict discipline) as childrearing in their teaching, which shapes the perceptions of teaching, the learning process, and expectations of what a good teacher is. Consequently, in a classroom, students should be quiet and self-disciplined, and should refrain from challenging the transmitted knowledge in order to show their respect to their teachers. Students are also required to be mentally active rather than verbally active (Hu, 2002), so they should not initiate communication in class. Moreover, teaching methods are teacher-dominated (Biggs, 1996). Hu (2002) stated:

The teacher selects points of knowledge from authoritative sources (usually textbooks and classics), interprets, analyzes, and elaborates on these points for the students, helps them connect the new points of knowledge with old knowledge, and delivers a carefully sequenced and optimally mediated dose of knowledge for the students to memorize, repeat, and understand. (p. 98)

Seeing CHL classrooms as bilingual and bicultural environments and approaching from the concept of intercultural competence, this article based on a case study in a CHL classroom explores the following questions:

RQ1: Are there any intercultural conflicts in the interactions between Chinese American children and a Chinese teacher in a Chinese heritage language classroom?

RQ2: What are the cultural issues revealed in CHL teacher-student interactional conflicts, if any?

Method

Overview

This study analyzes the detailed classroom interactions in a Chinese heritage language classroom in the U.S. to reflect ways of which Chinese and American cultural values in teaching and learning come into conflict and their impact on CHL classroom dynamics. It follows a qualitative approach of data collection and analysis. We adopted several strategies to ensure the validity of the study and minimize researcher bias. First, to avoid selective observation and data recording, we conducted participant observations and recorded all the classroom interactions during the academic year of 2006-2007. Our prior teaching experience in the Chinese school helped us establish the connections with teachers and the principal there. We resigned from teaching at the school before conducting this study, but we were allowed to have access to the classrooms as well as their students after going through the human subject review process as well as obtaining the consents from the children's parents.

Procedure

We employed multiple data collection methods and obtained multiple data sources for data triangulation including participant observations, audio-taping classroom interactions, and an informal open-ended interview with the teacher. Altogether, 20 hours of classroom interactions and one hour of interview with the teacher were audiotaped. Since her native language was Chinese, the interview with the teacher was conducted in Chinese, but was translated into English afterwards. The interview was conducted in the teacher's home, asking her perception of classroom interactions and her feeling of teaching CHL students, which was used to cross-check and triangulate our findings from the classroom data. Third, as bilingual-bicultural researchers who had been through both Chinese and American educational systems,

we were aware that our personal experiences might affect our interpretations of Chinese American children's interactions in their CHL classroom. To minimize researcher bias, all the data were collected and analyzed/interpreted by the two authors for investigator triangulation. In addition, we constantly conducted critical self reflection regarding data analysis and interpretation. Next, we introduce in detail the research site, focal class, and analytical tool. The names of all of the participants and the CHL school discussed in this paper were replaced with pseudonyms in order to establish and maintain confidentiality.

The study was situated in a local CHL school, Hope Chinese Language School, in an urban city in the Southwestern U.S. The Chinese Language School is one of the four Chinese schools in this urban city, and also an important part of the Chinese community. It operates outside of the American mainstream education system and seeks its own resources such as: voluntary teachers, funding, and textbooks. Almost all of the students' families, teachers, and administrative staff come from mainland China. The simplified Chinese written system and the Pinyin phonetic system are used in teaching. The school rents the facilities from a local church, but the school is operated outside of religion-related services. Operation of the school depends largely on donors and volunteers. Teachers are volunteers and do not necessarily have any teaching or language-teaching experience.

Focal Class

The focal class was designed to help Chinese American children develop their Chinese language skills through narrative practices, logical thinking, and creativity. Ms. Zhou used a variety of story-related activities to raise students' interest in Chinese language and culture. For example, she asked the students to brainstorm ideas and create a story based on their interests. The students then performed the story as a play at the end of the semester for their parents, other Chinese students, Chinese school teachers, and the principal.

In class, 11 students sat in a roundtable and Ms. Zhou stood in front of the table, near the board (see Appendix). At times, she approached the students if they were having difficulty expressing themselves in Chinese. Ms. Zhou gave the students opportunities to talk and interact with others in order to brainstorm story lines. We chose this class because it was designed to promote students' participation through the student-centered teaching approach as explicitly described in the course description. Therefore, it was interesting to investigate how students participated and interacted in this Chinese language class when opportunities were granted. Meanwhile, in this CHL class, according to Ms. Zhou and the school's mission, students were expected to behave in the Chinese way.

Data Analysis

Conversation Analysis (CA) was adopted as the analytical tool in data analysis because it provides a detailed analysis of a particular sequence of utterances that occurs in natural settings; it allows us to examine the ongoing moment-by-moment interactions (e.g., adjacent pairs, significant silence) among the speakers (e.g., students and the teacher). These ongoing moment-by-moment interactions typically include turn-taking, language use, topic shift, non-

verbal behavior, and so on (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974). CA takes what is said as the source of observations, of evidence, and of explanations (Schiffrin, 1994). Through the investigation of these interactions, we were able to see the stances and acts that speakers took and consequently the sociocultural context that emerged from these interactions. In addition, CA is able to show how different participants (e.g., students and the teacher) influenced each other and how their interactions shaped the sociocultural context in a reciprocal nature.

Findings

According to the interview conducted with the teacher, Ms. Zhou, classroom rules included no eating in class, raising your hand before talking, being quiet when others are talking, no jumping-in conversations, and sitting on the chair properly. Ms. Zhou reported that she adopted these rules because they are usually expected in a Chinese classroom. She often reminded the students of the rules when she noticed students' "misbehaviors" in class. However, through data analysis, we noticed many cases of interactional confrontations between the teacher and the students. When we asked her how she described her feeling of teaching CHL students, she smiled and commented, "Very tough! Chinese is a difficult language to learn. They [CHL students] don't have much time to practice and they don't know how they should behave like Chinese students." In the following section, we provide three excerpts to illustrate how the tensions between Ms. Zhou and the students emerged in classroom interactions. We looked into classroom interactions to analyze how cultural discontinuity caused conflicts and tensions, as well as the assumptions made behind them.

Power Relation: Teacher versus Students

Power relation, as we used in this study, means that even if a teacher gives students the freedom to participate in activities, the teacher controls the flow of the class and has the power to keep students focused. Since Chinese immigrant parents have chosen to send their children to CHL schools to learn Chinese culture and language, they, as well as CHL teachers, expect that the classroom will follow Chinese traditions in terms of learning and teaching. For example, children are expected to respect their teachers by following instructions and avoiding questioning teachers. However, as demonstrated in Excerpt 1, some students not only tended to initiate communications, but controlled the proceedings of the class.

Excerpt 1 below illustrates how students, especially Andrew, attempted to control the classroom interaction through a shift in alignment from a student to "a teacher" when Ms. Zhou was helping the class create a story together.

Excerpt 1. (The bold and italicized parts are English translations.)

1 Ms. Zhou: Ok, ok, ok. 好.那, 我 上次 的是我 个故事一 始的 候是-

[Okay, okay, okay, okay. So, what we talked about last time is when our story starts-]

2 Andrew: [yeah, we, Kyle, and Anny

3 Ms. Zhou: [Andy, not Anny

- 4 Andrew: Oh well. Mr. Spy is late. Oh, he just flies for getting back from South Africa, meeting parents.
- 5 Students: (laugh)
- 6 Andrew: [unintelligible] South Africa to beat Kully Banks.
- 7 Kyle: [He could be spy.
- 8 An-Bo: [Hi, Kully Banks.
- 9 Sophie: 我没有costume [**I don't have costume**]. I want to buy one.
- 10 Ms. Zhou: You can cut cardboard.
- 11 Sophie: No.
- 12 Ms. Zhou: That'll be fun. (Turning towards the boys.) 坐好, 坐好。Ok, ok, ok. 一 ▫ 始的 ▫ 候, 一 ▫ 始的 ▫ 候 先是他 ▫ 三个把你 ▫ 都捉住了。 [**That'll be fun. (Turning towards the boys) Sit properly; Sit properly. Okay, okay, okay. At the beginning, at the beginning, they will capture you three-**
- 13 Andrew: [YEAH! Dog me, dog me, dog ME and dog Kyle
- 14 Ms. Zhou: Okay.
- 15 Andrew: Okay. Let me talk, at the beginning of the scene, um, the bad guy capture[s] all the good guys except for-
- 16 Andy: [no, not at the beginning.
- 17 Andrew: Well, at the very start of the-
- 18 Ms. Zhou: [Well, 一 ▫ 始的 ▫ 候, 一 ▫ 始的 ▫ 候, 先是好人在外面玩。 [**Well, at the beginning, at the beginning, good guys play outside at first.**
- 19 Andrew: [Yeah, let me, let me...how can umm go ...to-
- 20 Sophie: [that's about going be anywhere]
- 21 Andrew: Okay, fine.
- 22 Sophie: Probably in your way.
- 23 Andrew: Maybe I can land-
- 24 Ms. Zhou: [你 ▫ 想要 ▫ 什 ▫ ? [**What do you all want to say?**
- 25 Andy: I don't get it.
- 26 Andrew: You don't get it? We are arguing over what we should be, be doing at the beginning.
- 27 Andy: Could you include me?

Ms. Zhou initiated the review of the storylines students created in the previous week (Line 1). In Line 2, Andrew cut off Ms. Zhou by attempting to switch the topic to what he and other two students would do in the plot of the story that they developed. Ms. Zhou did not correct the disruption of the norm in the Chinese classrooms immediately; instead, the following speech act focused on helping Andrew correct the name calling of his peer Andy (Line 3). In the continuing interactional moves (Lines 4-9), the students jumped into the conversation freely, overlapped each other, and initiated new conversation topics. Ms. Zhou regained her position/footing as the teacher by using an imperative phrase in a commanding tone, "Sit properly" (Line 12), and also using the discourse marker "okay" as a speech event boundary to return to the topic she initiated at the beginning. As the student-teacher

interaction continued (Line 13), Andrew interrupted Ms. Zhou when she used the discourse marker “okay” one more time to try to re-obtain the floor (Line 14). However, Andrew took the turn over again (Line 15).

Language indexes the identities and relationships that are constructed via interaction (Schiffrin, 1994), so “Let me talk,” as Andrew requested, indexes his footing as a spokesman for the whole class including Ms. Zhou. Andy then interrupted Andrew and questioned his “authority” (Line 16). The function of the interjection discourse marker “well,” used by Andrew (Line 17), is to signal the message that an upcoming contribution would not be fully consonant with Andy’s question, but that he would move on and keep the conversational floor. Then Andy expressed that he could not catch up on what Andrew and other students were talking about (Line 25). Andrew asked a rhetorical question, “You don’t get it?,” which functions as an information check and also positions Andrew to the center of the speech community (Line 26). Therefore, Andy asked Andrew for permission to include his role at the beginning of the story (Line 27), which demonstrates Andrew’s dominant role in class.

This excerpt illustrates the power negotiation between the students and the teacher during class. Ms. Zhou had to negotiate her role in the classroom; she did not always hold her “power” as expected by the Chinese norms of teaching. In the follow-up interview, Ms. Zhou sighed, “Some children in class do not know any rules, like what they do in their regular schools,” which entails her impression of mainstream classrooms: Students freely participate in class. Although Ms. Zhou expected students to behave according to the Chinese norms, she did not have a concrete plan when conflicts occurred.

Learning to Act Chinese

The Chinese Language School’s mission states that the school is “dedicated to the teaching and promotion of the Chinese language and culture...The philosophy of teaching at the School follows the Confucian ideal of ‘teaching while educating the whole person.’” Based on this mission, the goal of Chinese teaching at the school is not only to teach the students to learn the Chinese language and culture, but also the norms of acting Chinese. However, as shown in Excerpt 2, directly disciplining students by using the Chinese norms cannot lead to an automatic mutual understanding, nor can it lead to Chinese cultural learning; indeed, this was demonstrated by Andrew’s resistance.

Excerpt 2. While Ms. Zhou was talking to one student some boys were pushing water bottles toward each other on their desks. One bottle flew off the desk.

- 1 Students: (laugh)
- 2 Zhou: Stop it! Nobody takes it!
3. 不要放在上面！ [**Don’t put it on the desk!**]
4. (Staring at Andrew)
5. 就知道玩。 [**The only thing you know is to play.**]
- 6 Andrew: → Hey, What? He started being mean. What?
- 7 Zhou: → You should get along together. You are older.
- 8 Andrew: They should know better. Yeah, he did it too.

- 9 Why you are always hard on me, but easy on him?
 10 Zhou: → Because he is younger than you.
 11 Andrew: → So, why?
 12 Zhou: (.4) (ignores Andrew, and turns to ask Eric.)

In Excerpt 2, when Andrew made trouble by pushing water bottles and making noise in class, Ms. Zhou called upon him and looked directly at him, implying that he should not make trouble in class and distract other students' attention. Andrew picked up the teacher's cue and responded to her impolitely by saying, "Hey, what?" (Line 3). Although Andrew's response was disrespectful to the teacher, Ms. Zhou did not immediately correct his behavior toward her, but explained how he should act according to the Chinese cultural norm and why (Line 7). However, Andrew did not accept what Ms. Zhou told him, but claimed that another student should be blamed for starting the trouble (Line 8). In Line 9, Andrew further questioned Ms. Zhou by asking her why she always picked on him. Andrew "disobeyed" the Chinese cultural norm by questioning and challenging the teacher. Ms. Zhou ignored Andrew's attitude towards her; she once again addressed the age factor, explaining to him, "Because he is younger than you" (Line 7.) Ms. Zhou's response is paralleled with childrearing practices in Chinese tradition: parents impose stricter disciplines on older children than on younger ones because "young children are considered to be not yet capable of 'understanding things' and therefore should not be held responsible for their wrongdoings or failures to meet adult expectations" (Ho, 1989, p. 152). However, as Line 8 illustrates, Andrew either did not understand or resisted the Chinese norm that Ms. Zhou used in disciplining him. He openly and directly disagreed with and challenged Ms. Zhou's response, which is against the Chinese norm of respecting the teacher (Line 11). Ms. Zhou tried to teach Andrew how to act Chinese; however, the Chinese norm was not successfully negotiated as Ms. Zhou gave up inculcating Andrew and turned her attention to another child.

Disobedience

In Chinese classroom culture, students are not allowed to challenge the teacher's authority, but should do whatever is asked of them in class. Excerpt 3 illustrates that students' out-spoken disagreements and disobedience led to the silent moments in class (Lines 4, 17). The pause might indicate that Ms. Zhou probably did not know how she would handle the situation and/or was annoyed by students' responses.

Excerpt 3.

- 1 Kyle: Ms. Zhou, 我们能 [Can we] ah, a party too? Like Korean people next door?
 2 Ms. Zhou: No, we can't. It's Chinese class time. 上课了, 不要讲话! [Class time, be quiet!]
 3 Kyle: But, I want to have a party. Are those sodas ours? Can I have one?
 (Looking at several Pepsi cans left on the shelf by Korean American children who had just left the classroom after their Sunday school)

- 4 Ms. Zhou: (looking at Kyle) (5.0) Ok. 我们的故事想怎么开始呢？
想要怎样开始这个故事呢？ [Okay. How do we want to start our story? How can we start this story?]
- 5 Jared: Once upon time.
- 6 (Students start laughing.)
- 7 Ms. Zhou: 说中文。很久很久以前。 [Speak Chinese. Long, long time ago.]
- 8 Jared: 很久很久以前, 有一个, 嗯 [Long, long time ago, there is a-]
- 9 Sophie: [很久很久以前,
有一个女王和她的女儿。她们在花园里玩。 [Long, long time ago, there are a queen and her daughter. They are playing in the garden.]
- 10 Ms. Zhou: 好。有一个女王和她的女儿。那还有一个小王子。 [Good. There're a queen and her daughter. So, there's a prince too.]
- 11 Sophie: No. 不。 [No.] I don't like it. 没有小王子。 [No prince.]
- 12 Ms. Zhou: 嗯？ 好吧。然后呢？ [Huh? Okay. What will happen next?]
- 13 Sophie: 她们就被坏人捉走了。 [They were taken away by bad people.]
- 14 (Eileen leaves her chair and dumps pencil shavings in the trash can.)
- 15 Ms. Zhou: Eileen. 回去坐好。 不许走来走去的。回到你的座位上去。 [Go back to your seat and sit appropriately. Don't walk around. Go back to your seat.]
- 16 Eileen: But, I need to clean it. (Continuing cleaning her pencil sharpener)
- 17 Ms. Zhou: (looks at Eileen, annoyingly) (3.0) 快点快点。 [Hurry up, hurry up.] (waiting for Eileen to go back to her seat)
- 18 (Eileen finished cleaning the sharpener and walks back to her seat.)
- 19 Ms. Zhou: 好。然后呢？ [Okay. What will happen next?]
- 20 Andrew: 我和Kyle, 我们是spy。我们就去救她们。 [Kyle and I. We are sp(ies). We are going to save them.]

When Kyle asked if they could have a party instead of class, Ms. Zhou rejected his request and emphasized that the class had already started (Line 2). Kyle did not give up, and claimed again that he wanted to have a party (Line 3). Ms. Zhou paused for about five seconds and then directed students' attention to the story that they were going to create (Line 4). When Ms. Zhou offered her idea of the story (Line 10), adding a character, "Little Prince," Sophie directly responded to Ms. Zhou with her disagreement (Line 11). Ms. Zhou answered, "嗯？ [Huh?]," signifying her surprise when hearing Sophie's disagreement, but then gave up and agreed with Sophie (Line 12). While other students were discussing their story plots, Eileen left her seat to clean her pencil sharpener. Ms. Zhou used the imperative tone, asking Eileen to go back to her seat immediately (Line 15). However, Eileen did not follow the order and insisted on cleaning up her pencil sharpener (Line 16). Ms. Zhou paused, looking annoyed at Eileen, but gave up her command; she asked Eileen to hurry up and then waited for her to go back to her seat (Line 17). From this excerpt, we noticed that disagreement and disobedience constantly took place in class. However, when such conflicts occurred, Ms. Zhou was annoyed but did not know how to handle the situation; instead, she made concessions and redirected her efforts to other topics.

Discussion

We contend that the tensions/conflicts between the students and the teacher in the classroom interactions have their cultural roots—the differences between Chinese and American cultural values that are reflected in classroom contexts. Ms. Zhou's comment in the interview echoed this notion, although she was not able to articulate what it really was—“我们中文学校的中国孩子跟国内的孩子很不同。他们 think in English, 行为也像美国孩子。(The Chinese children in our heritage language school are very different from their peers in China. They think in English and behave like American children).”

As Gao and Ting-Toomey (1998) described, “Status and role relationships are instrumental in shaping the way people communicate in Chinese culture” (p. 45). Chinese people define the self based on their relationships with others, and communicate with each other by constantly calculating and observing different sets of rules determined by various statuses and roles in society. Among the Five Cardinal Relationships (ruler-minister, father-son, husband-wife, brothers/sisters, and friends) in Chinese culture set forth by Confucianism, father-son relationship is one of the most important (Ho, 1998). As mentioned earlier, the relationship between a teacher and a student in Chinese culture resembles a father versus a son. The teacher is the authority figure and enjoys a higher status on the hierarchical structure, whereas students occupy a lower status. Students are expected to be obedient to the teacher and follow whatever the teacher says. In classroom contexts, this asymmetrical relationship dictates how, and how much, a student can speak. The students are expected to listen to the teacher and speak when called on. If they speak at all, they need to do it in a deferential manner in order to show respect to the teacher. Chinese parents always tell their children to “听老师的话 (listen to the teacher's talk).” Classroom behaviors such as talking freely, interrupting, standing up without permission, talking back to the teacher's command, and challenging the teacher, are considered unacceptable and disrespectful to the teacher.

In American culture, however, interpersonal relationships are based on equality and autonomy, and everyone should be treated equally. The concept of “others” is not as important as that in Chinese culture. “Communication in the U.S. is thus self-oriented and used primarily to affirm self-identity and to achieve individual needs and goals” (Gao & Ting-Toomey, 1998, p. 85). In addition, talking is greatly valued almost everywhere in American society, including at home, in school, and at work. In class, teachers encourage students to actively participate in discussions, presentations, and group work. Challenging teachers and expressing ideas freely in an American classroom are not considered misbehaviors and, on the contrary, they carry positive values. Unlike an authority figure and a knower in the Chinese tradition, the teacher's role in an American classroom is to lead students to truth by means of questioning (Scollon, 1999) so that students are expected to solve problems by analyzing and discussing the causes together with the teacher (Zhao, 2007). Also, students can stand up in class for personal needs such as going to the bathroom and sharpening the pencil if they want to. These behaviors are not seen as disrespectful behaviors.

With the knowledge of both Chinese and American cultural values and their reflections in classroom contexts, it is not difficult for one to understand the tensions/conflicts found in the CHL classroom. Heritage language learners are different from second/foreign language learners in terms of culture learning. “Heritage language learners have a dual and dubious identity as people who are both similar to and different from members of the target heritage culture because they are socio-historically connected with the target heritage culture yet experientially displaced from it” (He, 2004, p. 575). They are exposed to mainstream American cultural norms most of the time and are expected to observe American classroom culture. As for the Chinese values, the students may have some access/knowledge through their parents, and they come to the CHL school only on weekends. In other words, the heritage language learners were experiencing “cultural discontinuity” (Sindell, 1997), which takes place in school when children are expected to act according to norms which contradict a great deal of what they have learned before. Additionally, because the CHL class was on Sundays, some children did not like it. Also, the unvalued CHL learning experience in the public, the lack of awareness of the importance of learning CHL, the extra CHL homework, and the difficulty of developing Chinese literacy skills, all contribute to discouraging students’ participations. The teacher, on the other hand, grew up in Chinese culture and intended to pass on Chinese cultural values to the students by asking them to behave in a Chinese way, which is also the school’s mission. Thus, due to this, tensions and conflicts were inevitable. Ms. Zhou understood the challenge that CHL students and teachers face and stated in the interview, “我们老师能够把课上得有意思，让他们感兴趣，愿意来，就很好了。我们不想拿困难吓着他们。(It will be great if our teachers can make classes interesting and meaningful, and motivate students to come. We don’t want to scare them away with difficulties).” She was right in that increasing students’ interest was the best remedy for language learning. However, the cultural differences between the target Chinese culture and the mainstream American culture in which the students were situated cannot be ignored and need attention in CHL education. As evidenced in the previous section, several cultural issues have been revealed in CHL teacher-student interactional conflicts, including: the teacher’s lack of understanding of student-centered teaching in American classrooms, the students’ lack of understanding of student-teacher relationship in Chinese classroom culture, and Chinese cultural values, such as the fact that there are higher expectations and stricter discipline practices for older children, compared to the expectations and discipline of younger children.

To motivate learning and participation, Ms. Zhou attempted to promote the student-centered approach in teaching CHL, and shared power with the students through interactive storytelling activities. The students were encouraged to contribute to class discussions and the creation of their own stories. All these were valuable efforts. However, Ms. Zhou might be misunderstanding the meaning of the student-centered approach, or did not master the art of it. According to Kelly (1985), student-centered teaching means both the teacher and the student can initiate the activities, as long as the teacher guides students. A constructive student interaction should occur in an atmosphere that is comfortable yet controlled, which is by no means a way of abandoning teacher responsibility. Excerpt 1 illustrated how the students took control of the class and constantly interrupted Ms. Zhou, dominating the

discussion. Students even sensed Ms. Zhou's loss of control (i.e., Andy asked Andrew, who dominated the talking and took on a temporary "teacher" identity, to include him in the story). Additionally, Ms. Zhou's hesitation to correct students' unruly behaviors, and her concession, is probably due to her incomplete understanding of the American mainstream classroom culture. Ms. Zhou commented in her interview, "Children in class are loud. They all want to talk. I guess that's what they are asked to do in their regular schools." Ms. Zhou assumed that being talkative in class indicated students' active class participation, and that this was a norm in American mainstream classrooms. However, in American K-12 schools, "being loud and rowdy" is not a desired behavior, and will be corrected by American school teachers, especially when learning is disrupted.

Classroom interaction reflects the ways in which the learning situation is constructed, as well as how the tacit norms and the culture of the classroom shape the students' moment-by-moment interaction in a learning activity (Kumpulainen & Wray, 2002). We found that students' behaviors often disrupted the flow of the class, as illustrated in the three classroom excerpts. Ms. Zhou tried to discipline the students in a Chinese way, but students' lack of understanding of Chinese classroom culture and Chinese cultural values led to resistance and disobedience. For example, turn-taking became unruly: overlapping, interrupting, and grabbing the floor without teacher's permission frequently took place. Also, questioning and disagreeing with the teacher often led to odd silenced moments in class. Although we acknowledge other factors that might influence the teacher and the students' behaviors in class, the interactional conflicts in class demonstrated different interpretations/expectations of behavioral norms by the students and the teacher. Disciplining the students by simply imposing the Chinese cultural norms when tensions/conflicts occur is not an effective way to go. It might accentuate students' resistance to it and might also diminish students' motivation to participate in the learning process. We suggest that in order to better CHL education, with cultural issues taken into consideration, work needs to be done by both the teacher and the students. In the following section, we shall discuss our recommendations.

Implications for CHL Education

Although Chinese heritage cultural maintenance among CHL students is one of the goals to achieve in CHL schools, we argue that CHL education should aim at cultivating students' awareness of, and empathy towards, the belief/value systems in both cultures and ultimately their ability to make appropriate choices in daily interactions as effective bilingual/bicultural users. Therefore, the goal of CHL schools should not be limited to teaching and maintaining Chinese language and culture, but extended to build up Chinese American students' intercultural competence. In order to achieve this, it is also necessary to help CHL teachers develop their intercultural competence.

However, being exposed to Chinese culture (e.g., at home and the CHL schools) and American mainstream culture (e.g., mainstream K-12 schools) does not automatically make Chinese American students interculturally competent. Both the teacher and the students need to understand the importance of cultural learning while acquiring the Chinese language. More importantly, developing intercultural competence for both CHL teachers and students should

be intentionally addressed in class and linked to Chinese heritage language and literacy development, so as to facilitate CHL learning. As a result, CHL students can acknowledge the cultural differences that emerge in class, and then choose the way to appropriately act.

In order to develop intercultural competence, both CHL teachers and students need to develop three key attitudes (i.e., openness, respect, and curiosity), knowledge, and skills (Deardorff, 2006). They need to develop cultural self-awareness and reflect on their intercultural experience in order to understand the impact of underlying culturally conditioned norms, values, and beliefs on student classroom behaviors, interactions among students and the teacher, and teacher expectations. They also need to develop skills to observe, analyze, and relate to both cultures. For example, the following sample questions modified from Deardorff's study (2009) can be used to help develop intercultural competence:

1. Do I know how students/the teacher want(s) to be treated in both CHL and American mainstream classrooms?
2. What are culturally appropriate behaviors and communication style in CHL classrooms and American mainstream classrooms? How are they different?
3. Am I able to adapt my behavior and communication style to accommodate students/the teacher to avoid cultural conflicts in class?

In addition, Sercu (2005) suggested that when teachers compare cultures, they do so to familiarize their students with the target culture, as well as to help them reflect on their own cultural identity and develop deeper insights in their own culture. Such a cultural comparison method can also be used in CHL classrooms to help students reflect on their heritage culture and mainstream culture in order to build up intercultural competence. As Macías (1992) argued, "Students' engagement in classroom activity is enhanced when communication about both instructional and social concerns is part of the classroom instructional plan" (p.22). Therefore, CHL teachers need to know both Chinese and American cultures well, which can help them to explain similarities and differences between cultures as well as to identify cultural stereotypes for CHL students to attain intercultural competence. As a result, raising both the teacher and students' awareness of cultural dynamics and expectations can prepare for effective student-teacher interactions. Hence, intercultural competence helps students to go beyond objective culture (e.g., festival, food) and extend learning to develop subjective culture (e.g., values, beliefs) (Triandis, 1994).

Although this case study illustrated specific ways of how cultural discontinuity hindered classroom communication and performance in a CHL class and suggested a direct application in reforming CHL teaching practice, it is limited to be descriptive in nature. Further research is needed to investigate if, empirically, acquiring intercultural competence by both the teacher and students and integrating intercultural themes into the CHL class can directly facilitate CHL learning in class.

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Appendix: Student Demographic Information

Name	Gender	Grade	Years at the Chinese School	Birth Place	Siblings
Eileen	Female	3 rd grade	2 years	U.S.	One younger brother
Katherine	Female	2 nd grade	1 year	U.S.	No
Sophie	Female	2 nd grade	2 years	U.S.	No
Andrew (A)	Male	3 rd grade	3 years	U.S.	No
Andy	Male	2 nd grade	1 year	China	No
An-Bo	Male	4 th grade	3 years	China	No
Eric	Male	3 rd grade	0.5 year	U.S.	No
Jake	Male	1 st grade	1 year	U.S.	One older sister
Jared	Male	2 nd grade	1 year	U.S.	One older sister
Kyle	Male	3 rd grade	3 years	U.S.	No
Lawrence	Male	3 rd grade	3 years	U.S.	No

Note: All pseudonyms are used to identify students.