

Chapter 54

A Comparative Study on the Curriculum in the Community–Based Chinese Heritage Language (CHL) Schools and Dual Language Immersion (DLI) Program

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ABSTRACT

This chapter compares and contrasts the curriculum, pedagogy, instructional materials, and extracurricular activities in a community-based CHL school and a Chinese-English DLI program in a southeast state of the US to discern how each is promoting Chinese immigrant children's heritage language and cultural learning. The author also explored how each school was supported by the local community. The result of this study indicates that the curriculum of the community-based CHL school was more focusing on teaching heritage culture as well as the reading and writing of Chinese words. In the Chinese-English DLI program, its cultural study curriculum in the social studies classes was more focused on the US citizenship education. However, in the social studies classes, teachers in the DLI program were able to integrate more Chinese literacy learning activities into the subject content instruction.

INTRODUCTION

In the US, there are two major educational institutions that promote Chinese immigrant children's heritage language and cultural learning: the community-based CHL schools and Chinese-English DLI program of the K-12 schools. This case study compares and contrasts the curriculum, pedagogy and instructional

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materials used in two types of the Chinese language education institutions in the US: a community-based CHL school and a Chinese-English DLI program in a southeast state of the US.

The community-based CHL schools in the US are normally founded by the Chinese immigrants' community to support the learning of Chinese heritage language and culture of their children (also known as the CHL children or CHL learners). This is because most mainstream K-12 schools in the US do not offer Chinese language and culture classes specially for the CHL learners. The communities of Chinese immigrants have had to establish Chinese schools on their own in order for their children to retain heritage language and culture (Liu, 2010). Chinese communities hope that by teaching Chinese culture and language to their children, their children can not only maintain and develop their native Chinese culture but also able to pass down the Chinese heritage culture to the next generations. Today, community-based CHL schools serve many Chinese children. As Wen and Li (2016) mentions, there were approximately 200,000 students enrolled in the community-based CHL schools in recent years across the US. Today's community-based CHL schools provide CHL learners more choices to learn about Chinese language and culture since they are diversified in the course materials, the medium of instruction as well as types of Chinese characters that they teach. Depends on founders' place of origin such as mainland China and Taiwan, the community-based CHL schools may either teach simplified or traditional Chinese characters, and they may also either use Mandarin Chinese or Cantonese as the medium of instruction. The instructional materials or textbook used in the CHL school vary. However, the most prevalent textbook or course materials adopted in the CHL school include "*the Zhongwen (Mandarin Chinese Language) Course Materials*", "*Ma Li Ping Mandarin Chinese Textbook Series*" and "*Holistic Education Mandarin Chinese Textbook Series*". The community-based CHL school in this study (pseudonym: the Southside CHL School) adopted both "*Zhongwen Mandarin Chinese Course Materials*" and "*Ma Li Ping Mandarin Chinese Textbook Series*".

Like most of community-based CHL schools in the US, the Southside CHL School had no permanent school buildings since it rented a school building and classrooms from a local high school as the temporary school site. In the past few years, the physical site of the Southside CHL School had been changed twice since it had to find lowest rent from a local K-12 school which could lease its school building during the weekends.

The Southside CHL School provided 2 hours of Chinese language and literacy class every Saturday morning followed by 1 hour of activity class except for the weeks of public holidays when most of its students were not available. As a nonprofit educational organization, the tuition of the Southside CHL School was very low which was approximately 200 dollars per semester. This price was affordable for most of CHL students in the region. However, at same time, with very limited budget from the tuition, the school did not have sufficient funding to conduct in-service teacher training regularly as well as recruit professional teachers with teaching license.

From my classroom observations in the Southside CHL School, I found teachers in the Southside CHL School include parents of CHL children, the Chinese community members living in the local area as well as volunteers from local colleges and universities. Some teachers in the Southside CHL School were even parents whose children also attended the Southside CHL School. Most of those parents and college volunteers neither have prior experience in teaching language and literacy classes in the US K-12 schools level nor have they received professional teacher education and training. They just mechanically followed procedures indicated by their designated textbook or course materials to teach without internalizing an overarching conceptual framework on students' language and literacy learning, and perceiving students' learning of listening, speaking, reading, writing skills of target language and cultural competence

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