

Ethnolinguistic Vitality, Motivation and the Learning of English for Ethnic Chinese Students in Hong Kong and Sydney

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Introduction

In Australia, English is the first and usually the only language of about 83% of the population (1983 Language Survey). The lack of proficiency in English correlates with lower paid employment and occupational mobility. Very often new immigrants with limited English proficiency are in a less advantageous position to get access to government assistance and job opportunities. The Australian government has done a lot to ease the hurdle by providing services in multi-languages and voluntary and government agents to help the new immigrants. Australia had demonstrated the possibility of establishing a stable and cohesive society in a landmass being geographically isolated and able to control its immigrant input (Smolicz, Hudson and Secombe, 1998). After the establishment in 1901 of the Australian Federation as an independent state within the British Empire (later Commonwealth), the national identity was a form of Anglo-Celtic which evolved gradually over time. It was what Smolicz *et al.* described as a solution to the dilemma of reconciling the immigrants' love of their homeland and its culture and their desire to adapt to the overarching Australian framework (Smolicz *et al.*, 1998). The multicultural policies adopted by both Labor and Liberal governments after 1975 paved the way for the ethnic minority to retain their cultural identity while at the same time being encouraged to share the overarching values of Australians. English remains the common language for work and education and every aspect of life. In some cases, children of limited proficiency in English experience difficulties in formal education because it is conducted in English. The perception of being rejected by the majority may lead to a stigma effect and affect the psychological well-being, family relationships and ethnic identity of language-minority children.

The acceptance of non-English speaking background immigrants was once considered a financially non-viable process for resources have to be expended to integrate them to the mainstream community. Stanton and Lee (1996) saw the situation differently. They argued that cultural diversity should be viewed as an asset, which could improve Australia's economic performance, particularly its trade performance. Personal familiarity with the cultural, linguistic and others constitutes the potential huge advantage in penetrating markets of the immigrants' host countries. The use of the language of trading partners definitely facilitates the communication and understanding between them. The knowledge of, and the networks built with, the trading partners are the most important among many aspects of ethnic resources. Stanton and Lee (1996) remarked that the utilization of these ethnic resources may increase trade with related overseas partners. Stanton *et al.* (1996) investigated the relationship between the growth in Australian export to particular countries and the growth in size of ethnic groups residing in Australia from these countries for the years between 1971 and 1991. The results did show that there may be some association between the export opportunities which are being created through rapid economic growth in Pacific rim economies and the rapid growth in Australia of ethnic groups from these countries.

Bilingual education

The relinquishment of the historical unilingual (English) nature of Australian society, and the legitimacy of a multicultural, multilingual historical reality and identity of Australia, had a significant impact on language in Australia (Lo Bianco, 1991). The policy maintains the centrality of English in Australian life, while advocating an expansion of community language teaching and use. Being bilingual has a pragmatic consequence for the future development of Australia. Geographically, Australia lies in the Asia-Pacific region. With the recent fast growth of the economies of the Asian countries, Australia needs nationals who are proficient in at least one of the Asian languages to expand its economic ties in the region. The ethnic minorities who identify themselves ethnically are not necessarily striving for separatism. On the contrary, the construction of a culturally pluralist state with respect to cultural and linguistic diversity can encourage individuals to cross cultural borders and interact creatively.

Many major language researchers have chosen a social psychological orientation toward language learning motivation. A leading social psychological theorist, Robert Gardner, introduced the concepts of integrative and instrumental motivation in relation to second language acquisition. In his conceptualisation, students will have higher performance in the second language performance if they exhibit the desire to learn the second language in order to integrate themselves with the target culture than when they exhibit the desire to learn the language in order to get a better job or meet a particular requirement. Gardner's socio-educational model (Gardner, 1979) includes attitudinal variables such as attitudes toward the target language group, language teachers, language course and the learning of the language; motivational variables such as the desire to learn the language and motivational intensity; and anxiety variables such as anxiety pertinent to the language class and language use.

It is difficult to separate the societal influence from the acquisition of language, for students constantly interact with the language environment in which they communicate. The perceived status of language affects the use of and attitude toward a language. In studying the social influence on second-language acquisition, Clément (1980) extended Giles, Bourhis and Taylor's (1977) concept of ethnolinguistic vitality to relate the individual's acquisition of practice and maintenance of communicative competence in second language to the social/structural characteristics of the corresponding community. Ethnolinguistic vitality (Giles *et al.*, 1977) refers to structural characteristics such as socio-economic status, demographic representation and institutional support pertinent to a language. In a multi-ethnic setting such as found in Australia, it would be expected that it is the languages of groups showing the strongest ethnolinguistic vitality that are likely to predominate. Clément (1980) conceptualised ethnolinguistic vitality as initiating an individual motivational process which mediates the influence of milieu on communicative competence.

Social and Societal Variables

Ethnolinguistic Vitality

Giles *et al.* (1977) proposed a construct called ethnolinguistic vitality to develop a framework for the role of socio-structural variables in inter-group relations, cross-cultural communication, second-language learning, mother-tongue maintenance, and language shift and loss. They first introduced the taxonomy of structural variables affecting ethnolinguistic groups and then presented an integration of Tajfel's theory of intergroup relations and Giles's theory of speech accommodation. The vitality of an ethnolinguistic group is defined as "that [which] makes a group likely to behave as a distinctive and active collective entity in intergroup situations" (Giles *et al.*, 1977, p 308) According to Giles *et al.* (1977), if ethnolinguistic minorities have little or no group identity, they would eventually cease to exist

as distinctive groups. The structural variables most likely to influence the vitality of ethnolinguistic groups are:

1. *Status* variables: economic status, social status, sociohistorical status and language status,
2. *Demographic* variables: sheer numbers of group members and their distribution throughout the territory,
3. *Institutional support* variables: the extent to which a language group receives formal and informal representation in various activities such as mass media, education, government services, industry, religion and culture.

Development of ethnolinguistic identity theory

According to the ethnolinguistic identity theory proposed by Giles and his colleagues (Giles & Johnson, 1981, 1987), individuals are motivated to maintain a positive social identity derived from membership of a particular ethnolinguistic group. Clément and Noels (1992) suggested that when an individual is given a choice, he or she will identify with that group which is most likely to provide the greatest positive social identity, the group with the greatest ethnolinguistic vitality. There will appear a tendency for a minority member to identify with the powerful majority group when in contact, i.e., to assimilate into the majority group with the relinquishment of membership of the first culture. On the other hand, for a majority-group member, inter-ethnic contact should result in the acquisition of an additional identity, i.e., to integrate with the minority group with an interest in adopting both identities. Whether assimilation or integration dominates is determined by the relative ethnolinguistic vitalities of both cultures.

Giles and Byrne (1982) interpreted Giles *et al.*'s (1977) construct of ethnolinguistic vitality as the cognitive representation of the socio-structural forces operating in inter-ethnic contexts. According to Giles and Byrne (1982), the more of these socio-structural factors a particular group has in its favour, the more vitality it is considered to have. Under the same account of objective assessment of ethnolinguistic factors, individuals may think differently, depending on how these are perceived in individual circumstances. As remarked by Bourhis, Giles and Rosenthal (1981), a group's subjective assessment of its vitality as is at least equally important as the group's objective vitality (Giles, Rosenthal & Young, 1985; Giles & Johnson, 1981). They further contended that group members' subjective assessment of out-group members' ethnolinguistic vitality may also be crucial in determining patterns of inter-group behaviours.

Giles and Johnson (1981) remarked that the social psychological approach to language and inter-ethnic behaviour allows us to predict who in an ethnic group uses which language strategy. According to Giles and Johnson (1987), the ethnolinguistic identity theory is strongly related to Tajfel and Turner's (1979) social identity theory on intergroup behaviour. Giles *et al.*'s social identity, according to Tajfel and Turner (1979), is built around our social categorisation of the world and the values attached to the category memberships. Ethnic group identity is important for individuals, and they may attempt to make themselves favourably distinct on valued dimensions such as language. This process of achieving a satisfactory and secure social identity for individuals can enhance their self-esteem. In terms of cultural or linguistic pluralism, the conditions are likely to depend on relative parity in

status and power between the in-group and the out-group. Stable pluralism is likely to prevail when ethnic group members

Currie and Hogg (1994), in their study of social adaptation among Vietnamese refugees in Australia, found three factors that did not closely follow the dimensions originally proposed by Giles *et al.* (1977) and Bourhis *et al.* (1981). Instead, the three factors identified in an exploratory factor analysis procedure are: "language vitality", "political and economic vitality", and "cultural and religious vitality". Concurrently, Allard and Landry reconceptualized the social-structural variables into four categories or "capitals": "demographic capital", "political capital", "economic capital", "cultural capital", and introduced the belief system as the cognitive representation of subjective vitality (Allard & Landry, 1994, 1986; Landry & Allard, 1994, 1992).

Ethnolinguistic vitality and language behaviour

Landry and Allard (1994) redefine the societal variables into four capitals: demographic, political, economic and cultural. The new taxonomy is conceptualised as followed (Allard & Landry, 1994; Landry & Allard, 1992):

1. *Demographic capital*: the number of ethnolinguistic group members, their relative proportion in the total population, their degree of concentration within a territory, their relative birth rate, the degree of endogamy and exogamy, and the rates of immigration and emigration.
2. *Economic capital*: the degree of ethnolinguistic members represent in, and have control of, commercial and industrial institutions.
3. *Political capital*: the degree of representativeness of the group at various levels of government, the degree to which the group is provided government services in its language, the existence of pressure groups and organized social movements representing the group.
4. *Cultural capital*: the degree to which the group has institutional support in the fields of education, religion, culture and the mass media.

Landry and Allard (1992, 1994) and Allard and Landry (1994) went on to suggest individual network of linguistic contact (INLC) as an interface between the sociological aspects of the redefined ethnolinguistic vitality construct and the psychological aspects of language attitude and competence, beliefs on vitality and ethnolinguistic identity. Landry and Allard (1994) proposed that a great variety of beliefs are formed as a result of the individual's experiences in the INLC. Landry *et al.* also suggested that ethnolinguistic identity is viewed as the most deep-rooted aspect of cognitive-affective disposition and is affected by the strength and quality of contacts with ethnolinguistic groups. INLC is construed to involve subnetworks in each ethnolinguistic group, and the quantity and quality of contacts between ethnolinguistic groups are determined by the demographic vitality, degree of control of economy, and degree of political power and cultural capital of ethnolinguistic groups. The INLC can be measured by analysing interpersonal contacts, contacts through the media and contacts through schooling and family environment (Ibid.).

Subjective Vitality Questionnaire (SVQ)

Giles *et al.* (1977) proposed that each of their three factors may affect the vitality of ethnolinguistic group in one direction or the other. They also made a distinction between objective and subjective ethnolinguistic vitality to account for how group members subjectively perceive their sociostructural position in relation to their outgroup(s), in contrast to how the group's position was measured by objective means. Bourhis, Giles and Rosenthal (1981) developed the *Subjective Vitality Questionnaire (SVQ)* as a means of measuring group members' assessments of their own and their outgroup vitalities. Bourhis *et al.* (1981) argued that a group's subjective assessment of its vitality is important in determining such inter-ethnic behaviours as the group's objective vitality.

The original version of the SVQ consisted of a total of twenty-two items, nineteen were formulated in terms of the nineteen variables identified by Giles *et al.*, (1977) and measured the three main factors that contribute to a group's overall vitality. Of these, five items assess the status of the group, six assess the demographic strength of the group, and eight assess their institutional support. Two more items ask the subjects to evaluate the overall strength or degree of activity of each of the ethnolinguistic groups at the present time and in the future time (20 to 30 years from now). A final question asks the subjects to give their perception of the degree of contact between the two linguistic groups. A taxonomy of the structural variables affecting ethnolinguistic vitality was shown in Figure 1.

The administration of the SVQ requires the subjects to rate the vitality of in-group as well as out-group on the 22 items. The vitality of in-group and out-group can be compared. For example, in the research carried out by Yagmur, de Bot and Korzilius (1999), vitality perceptions of Anglo-Australians and Turkish Australians were assessed and compared when studying the language attrition and language shifts for Turkish immigrants. In the study of Florack and Piontkowski (1997), vitality perceptions of Dutch and Germans in the context of the progressive European unification were measured in assessing the group identification.

In their conceptualisation, Bourhis *et al.* (1981) argued that optimal use of subjective data would be best achieved when used in conjunction with objective information concerning the group's active ethnolinguistic vitality. Subjective vitality data could be used to monitor the position of minorities as distinctive collective entities in inter-group settings when objective vitality data were not available (e.g. between census years). Sometimes, individuals do not necessarily perceive their group's vitality accurately. Giles, Rosenthal and Young (1985) found that Anglo-Australians accentuated perceived differences between themselves and Greeks on many status and institutional support items, while at the same time Greek-Australians attenuated them. Pittam, Gallois and Willemyns (1991), in their Brisbane study, found that Anglo-Australians perceived higher vitality than Vietnamese and that the latter group's perceived vitality would rise significantly over time. Anglo-Australians from high Vietnamese-concentration suburbs had an exaggerated perception of the vitality of the Vietnamese both now and in the future. Both Anglo-Australians and Vietnamese realized that the situation of the Vietnamese would improve across the board in the next generation, although they did not expect it to attain to the level of Anglo-Australians..

Figure 1: A taxonomy of the structural variables affecting ethnolinguistic vitality

Vitality

Status Institutional

Factors Support and

(5 items) Demographic Control

Factors Factors

(6 items) (8 items)

Economic status

Social status

Sociohistorical status

Language status intragroup

intergroup

Regional concentration

Proportion Mass media

Birth rate Education

Mixed marriage Govt. services

Immigration Industry (2 items)

Emigration Religion

Culture

Politics

Based on Bourhis, R., Giles, H., & Rosenthal, D., (1981). Notes on the Construction of a 'Subjective Vitality Questionnaire' for Ethnolinguistic Groups. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 2(2), 149.

Subjective vitality as a belief system

Allard & Landry (1986) questioned the structure of SVQ. They suggested that subjective ethnolinguistic vitality is better conceptualised as having a much broader structure than the three dimensions proposed by Giles *et al.* (1977) and Bourhis *et al.* (1981). They based on the Kreitler & Kreitler's (1972, 1976, 1982) cognitive orientation model of human behaviour. Beliefs are cognitive units of meaning that are embedded in increasingly large networks of beliefs. Beliefs have no direct impact on behaviour but they do direct behaviour. It is the interactions between the beliefs and their subsequent reorganization into various groups of beliefs leads to the formation of behavioural intentions. These intentions are linked to the initiation of action programs, and in turn, lead to action and feedback that are responsible for the modification of intentions, behaviour programs and beliefs. Kreitler & Kreitler identified four types of beliefs that contribute significantly to better prediction of behaviour: (1) General beliefs about the factual relationship between a subject and an object of reference, (2) Normative beliefs concerning to what should exist as regards the vitality situation, (3) Personal beliefs about respondents' present behaviour or situation, (4) Goal beliefs about respondent's own desire to behave in certain ways regarding key aspects of vitality. Allard and Landry (1986) argued that the perceptions measured in Bourhis *et al.*'s (1981) questionnaire most closely resemble Kreitler and Kreitler's (1976) general beliefs, and accordingly SVQ sampled only one of the four types of beliefs needed for a more successful prediction of behaviour.

Beliefs on Ethnolinguistic Vitality Questionnaire (BEVQ)

Allard and Landry (1986) developed a 24-item version of the *Beliefs on Ethnolinguistic Vitality Questionnaire* (BEVQ) consisting of four subscales incorporating six of Giles *et al.*'s (1977) structure variables: language status within the subordinate group, social status, absolute numbers, concentration on a given territory, educational institutions and government services. Allard and Landry (1986) concluded that while general beliefs scales, as measured using SVQ of Bourhis *et al.* (1981), are capable to discriminate between different ethnic groups in the same milieu, they fail to differentiate intra-ethnic group in a specific context (e.g. sent children to first language schools or second language schools). The SVQ and BEVQ have been empirically compared by Bourhis and Bédard (1988) and Allard and Landry (1994). Bourhis and Bedard concluded that BEVQ was a better predictor of language use and language evaluation than the SVQ, SVQ is adequate for examining between differences. Allard and Landry (1994) administered their BEVQ and SVQ to their sample of francophone minorities across Canada, BEVQ was found to be a more powerful predictor of ethnolinguistic behaviour accounting for 70% of the variance, while the SVQ accounted for 44% of the variance in francophone linguistic behaviour. It is conceptualized that SVQ can be used as a descriptive measure that can help validate the choice of ethnolinguistic groups, BEVQ can serve as a reliable predictor of a broad range of ethnolinguistic behaviours including language attitudes, language use and additive and subtractive bilingualism.

The BEVQ measures a wide spectrum of cognitive-affective representations of vitality and was shown to detect intra-ethnic group differences while the SVQ could not (Allard & Landry,

1986). The BEVQ was considered be able to provide an important basis for the study of language maintenance and loss as well as other aspects of intra- and inter-group functioning.

The 16 EV items used in the study of learning of English as a second language for Hong Kong students

16 items were drawn from the study of the motivation of learning English as a second language for Hong Kong students in Sydney by the author. The construction was based on the four different kinds of beliefs (Kreitler & Kreitler, 1982) and four capitals (Allard & Landry, 1994). Two items were written for each of the four beliefs, namely, General beliefs, Norm beliefs, Personal beliefs, and Goal beliefs. The four capitals were Demographic capital, Economic capital, Political capital, and Cultural capital. A total of 32 items were written. After pilot study to 71 students in Sydney, sixteen items were removed due to low factor loadings and item-total correlation in factor analysis procedure.

Methodology

A questionnaire of 59 items was administered to 860 students from Hong Kong schools. The 59 items were from three sources:

- 19 Subjective Vitality Questionnaire (SVQ) items (Bourhis, Giles & Rosenthal, 1981) were translated into Chinese, students were asked to respond twice on the same items for British people in Hong Kong and local Chinese;
- 24 items from Allard and Landry's Beliefs on Ethnolinguistic Vitality Questionnaire (BEVQ) items (Allard & Landry, 1986) were translated into Chinese;
- 16 items were drawn from another study by the author on the motivation to learn English as a second language.

Results

1. SVQ items: 3 factors were found for Chinese vitality and 4 factors were found for English vitality;
2. BEVQ items: 2 factors, instead of 4 factors as conceptualised by Allard *et al.* (1986) were determined;
3. SVQ relative vitality (vitality for Chinese minus that of English) scores were found correlated more highly with BEVQ exocentric beliefs (General, Normative) than egocentric beliefs (Personal and Goal);
4. 4 factors were identified for 16 newly constructed items (EVHK) from Landry and Allard (1992) model of additive and subtractive bilingualism;
5. the constructed EVHK items were in the same factor as BEVQ items.

Tables

Table 1 Rotated factor loadings of 16 SVQ items (varimax) rating of Chinese vitality

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Chinese as International language	.54		
Chinese is important	.51		
Chinese in commerce	.49		
Chinese in cultural activities	.36		
Chinese used in schools	.34		
Chinese language status	.34		
Chinese in cultural life			
Wealth of Chinese			
Absolute no of Chinese	.51		
Population of Chinese	.48		
birthrate of Chinese	.42		
Mixed marriage of Chinese	.32		
Chinese in mass media	.56		
Chinese in worship	.36		
Chinese in government service	.36		

Note: only loadings >.3 are shown

Table 2 Rotated factor loadings of 16 SVQ items (varimax) rating of English vitality

Item Factor 1 Factor 2 Factor 3 Factor 4

English is important .73

English as international language .69

English in commerce .50 .41

English in government service .46

English used in schools .45

Wealth of British people .71

English in culture .52

English status .43 .46

English in cultural life .45

Absolute no of British .72

Population of British .68

birthrate of British .60

Mixed marriage of British .31 .32

Chinese in worship .76

Chinese in mass media .66

Note: only loadings >.3 are shown

Table 3 Rotated factor loadings of 24 BEVQ items (varimax)

Items Factor 1 Factor 2

British people status now .63

English language norm status .62

English language status now .55

- British people norm status .50
- English in medium of instruction in uni .50 .37
- English in government notices .50
- Migrate to English speaking countries .46 .31
- English as working language in govt .46
- Using English can improve English standard .43 .41
- British live in certain district only .38
- Chinese in government notice -.31
- Good for British live in certain district -.59
- Use Chinese in medium of instruction -.35 -.51
- Welcome British people to Hong Kong .43 .48
- British people should distribute fairly .46
- My social status -.43
- Be fluent in English .42
- Chinese in government notices .38 .42
- Same social status as British people -.40
- British people choose to stay in Hong Kong .39

Note: only loadings >.3 are shown

Table 4 Rotated factor loadings of 16 EVHK items (varimax)

Items	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
More options to learn Chinese	.68			
I appreciate Chinese culture	.64			
More funds to promote learning of Chinese	.60			
To preserve Chinese tradition	.54			

- Not enough finance to promote Chinese .35
 - More ethnic Chinese in govt service
 - Govt notices in both English and Chinese .67
 - Feel good when all government notices are bilingual .65
 - Abnormal for government notices in English only -.51
 - Feel uneasy when all officials are British -.46
 - Not legal to exclude Chinese culture
 - Target more English speaking to Hong Kong .57
 - More English speaking people can enrich culture .53
 - British culture has a lot to offer .48
 - To emphasize English is good for Hong Kong .46
 - More British people, more significant British culture .38
- Note: only loadings >.3 are shown*

Table 5 Correlations between BEVQ items and variables of relative vitality SVQ

	RDV	RSV	RIV	General belief	Norm belief	Personal belief	Goal belief
RDV	.12	.33	.12	.04	.04	-.03	
RSV	.46	.44	.41	.29	.31		
RIV	.42	.32	.22	.23			
General belief	.70	.46	.46				
Norm belief	.50	.49					
Personal belief	.34						
Goal belief							

Note: all are significant at $p < .0001$

Significant results:

- different factor patterns for Bourhis *et al.* (1981) SVQ items in Canadian and Hong Kong contexts;
- SVQ items were found related to exocentric beliefs, but not egocentric beliefs;
- the 16 EVHK items performed as well as BEVQ items, though they had different factor patterns.

Discussion

Since Giles *et al.* (1977), there were many different forms of Ethnolinguistic vitality items measuring the degree of acculturation to second language culture. One believes that if one has high orientation towards a second language culture, he will have high motivation to learn the second language. Clément (1980) incorporated the relative ethnolinguistic vitalities of the first and second language groups and the frequency, and quality of contact with the second language group to determine the motivational process in second language outcomes. In multicultural setting in which contact with second language group is possible, higher quality and frequency of contact will enable him/her to have self-confidence using the second language in adaptive and efficient manner. Clément's model can address the relationship of second language learning and perceived vitalities of the first and second languages.

Ethnic Chinese students in Sydney and in Hong Kong would have different relative ethnolinguistic vitalities under different language environment. Ethnic Chinese students in Sydney are expected to have high motivation in their learning of English for they would have higher frequencies and quality contacts with English speaking people, and they would have higher communicative competence in using English. Whereas students in Hong Kong have less chance in contacting English speaking people and the use of English often is confined in school setting. Another factor that affects the acquisition of English is the survival needs in Australia's setting. They need to be competent in using English in daily communication and in their curriculum learning in school.

The study is part of a major study relating ethnolinguistic vitality, motivation, language anxiety and the performance of English language in the learning of English as a second language for Chinese students in Sydney. The schematic representation is in Figure 2 A causal modelling analysis of second language acquisition of Hong Kong students (see appendix)

Motivation was found to be positively related to language achievement, integrativeness and ethnolinguistic vitality were found indirectly positively related to language achievement. Integrativeness, attitudes toward language learning situation, self-efficacy and goal setting were found positively related to Motivation, while language anxiety negatively related to motivation. The study also shows that proficiency in Chinese and English both have an effect on the English achievement.

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