

# Linguistic and cultural identity of Indonesian Americans in The United States

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## ABSTRACT

This article examines the second-generation immigrants in California and focuses on their language use and cultural identity as Indonesian-Americans. This study investigated to what extent home language use and community involvement influenced mastery of Indonesian heritage language and what factors affected the forming of cultural identity. Data were drawn from self-assessed Indonesian Oral Proficiency Questionnaire and in-depth interviews of sixteen Indonesian-Americans aged fifteen to early twenties. Their parents were also interviewed as triangulation. Results show that parents' insistence in using Indonesian as home language and the youths' investment in support community have enhanced the mastery of Indonesian heritage language. Furthermore, exposure to the language and culture, investment, and community factors have affected the transformation of cultural identity.

**Keywords:** Indonesian-American; youth; heritage language; second-generation immigrants; linguistic identity; cultural identity

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## INTRODUCTION

Indonesians migrated to the U.S. for various reasons. Some came to study and then stayed post-graduation. Others migrated to search for better jobs. While the first generation of immigrants still expresses the sense of affinity to Indonesia, it is unclear whether their children share the same sense of belonging. The parents migrated to the U.S. to search for better lives. What language(s) they use with their children at home is a political, economical, and cultural decision. Each family has their own reasons for choosing to—or not to—expose their children to Indonesian as a heritage language (hereafter HL) at home or by involving them with their community. We observed heritage language loss among young Indonesians living overseas (Lie,

2011; Wijaya, 2006, 2016) and would like to investigate the influence of home language use and community engagement in predicting HL mastery and cultural identity of Indonesian-American youths. We aimed to find out to what extent the youths maintain their heritage language and culture amidst their immersion into the American culture. The participants of the study were children of immigrants who came in 1980s through early 1990s and currently reside in the Greater Los Angeles and San Francisco Bay Area because of their heavy concentrations of Indonesian immigrants.

Along with the widespread multilingualism in schools and societies, there have been a growing number of studies on identity and HL learning (Abdi, 2011; Blackledge & Creese, 2008; Duff, 2012).

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However, few studies have explored the learning of Indonesian as a heritage language. Wijaya (2006, 2016) reveals that many of her Indonesian American students are hardly fluent in Indonesian and most parents opt to use English with their children mostly for socio-economic reasons including preparing their children for school.

Within the context of Indonesian Americans' lives as immigrants and in light of the insights from identity formation and heritage language learning, this study examines the immigrants' children who are growing up in the American culture and focuses on their linguistic and cultural identity as Indonesian American youths. This study specifically investigated two questions: (1) to what extent did home language use and community involvement influence mastery of heritage language?; (2) what factors affected these youths in forming their cultural identity?

### **Studies on Heritage Language Learning**

Recently much attention has been placed on heritage language learners (hereafter HLLs) who constitute the majority of students in many foreign language programs in North American universities. An early definition of HLL introduced by Valdés (2001) defines HLL as learners who speak the heritage language at home, knowing quite enough of the language to converse fluently, albeit informally.

Broader definitions of heritage language learners, framed by Fishman (2001), Van Deusen-Scholl (2003), and Hornberger and Wang (2008) acknowledge the ancestral ties and the learners' connection with their heritage culture rather than their HL mastery or proficiency. They may know none, little, or much of the HL, but they are a part of the heritage culture. Studying mixed-heritage adults experiencing societal and personal pressures to shift to English, Shin (2010) finds that HL proficiencies varied widely depending on the participants' interaction in that language.

The use of HL has been tied with identity claims. A few studies on HL learning among Asian Americans focus on the relation between language practices and learners' cultural identity as second-generation immigrants. Lee (2002) reveals that her 40 second-generation Korean-American college students formed a unique bicultural identity composed of characteristics from both Korean and American cultures. Kang (2013) finds that Korean-American HLLs in her study used the two available codes for different communicative purposes: English was used as primary language while Korean was associated with their childhood memories, food, and kinship. Taking into account parental use of HL, Dixon, Zhao, Quiroz, and Shin (2012) prove that HLLs whose parents use HL to their children have broader HL vocabulary. From a different angle, Wijaya (2010) reveals that the more exposure the Indonesian HLLs have towards Indonesian, the higher their grammar proficiency is. Lie (2017) investigated the learning of Chinese HL by two multilingual youths in Indonesia and found that the participants would rather

use English than Chinese because the prevailing use of English has in some ways changed young people's behaviors, perceptions of themselves, and preferred ways of expressing themselves.

### **Identity Formation and HLL**

The degree of the loss and maintenance of the heritage language and culture vary among different groups of immigrants. For children of the immigrants, the challenge is to integrate the two cultures and to transform into one unique bicultural identity. Biculturalism assumes that it is possible for an individual to understand, respect, and integrate two different cultures in their lives. It also presumes that an individual can switch languages and cultural behaviors to fit a particular social context. Moreover, it infers that it is possible for an individual to have a sense of affinity to two different cultures without abandoning his or her sense of cultural identity (Hamers & Blanc, 1993). Nevertheless, youths belonging to second-generation immigrants experience a difficult process of constructing their identity, and this process is complicated by the fact that they are living in two cultural systems with two different sets of values.

Language has been identified as one of the most significant markers of affiliation to a cultural group since it is always used within a cultural environment, acts as a salient indicator of a group's identity transmitted from generation to generation, and serves as the main tool to internalize culture (Fishman, 1977). Others argue that language and culture exist independently of one another and bear no intrinsic relation to each other. Canagarajah and Silberstein (2012) show that Tamil youths index their community identity despite their low HL proficiency. Similarly, Hoffman (1991) states that proficiency in a language does not necessarily imply knowledge of the culture and vice versa. She argues that bilingualism and biculturalism exist in varying degrees along the continuum.

### **Motivation and Investment in Heritage Language Learning**

Norton (2013) distinguishes investment from motivation to capture the complex relationship of language learners to the target language and their sometimes ambivalent desire to speak it. Drawing from a longitudinal case study of immigrant women in Canada, she argues that learners' investment in the target language and their opportunities to practice it "must be understood in the context of their changing identities across historical time and social space" (p. 144). Thus, an investment in the target language is also an investment in a learner's own identity, an identity which is constantly changing across time and space" (pp. 50-51).

In the UCLA survey of HLLs' attitude towards HL, it shows that many HLLs regard HL as a part of who they are (Carreira & Kagan, 2011). They are motivated to learn the HL not only to connect or reconnect with their families and HL communities but

they see the HL as a part of their identity. Being able to joke around with their peers in their HL also makes HLLs happy because they share a feeling of common identity and in-group belonging. They also take into account that being fluent in the HL gives them many practical and career benefits, and they can help a bigger community by being bilingual in their HL and English.

**METHOD**

**Participants**

This study selected Indonesian Americans who live in

California, USA. We had sixteen participants aged fifteen through early twenties. Many of them were invited using personal contacts and snowballing method (Berg & Lune, 2012). All participants met the following criteria: (1) Indonesian-Americans; (2) whose parents were both first-generation immigrants in the US; and (3) had at least ten years of education in the U.S. The following table lists the language profile of the participants obtained from the self-assessed Indonesian Proficiency Questionnaire they completed prior to the interview.

Table 1. Language profile of participants

No.	Name	Indonesian Oral Proficiency	Language(s) Parents	spoken at home Child	Would enroll in an Indonesian course
1.	Gina	Advanced	Tio Ciu, Indonesian	Tio Ciu (85%) Indonesian (10%), English (5%)	No
2.	Fanny	Advanced	Indonesian	Indonesian	Yes
3.	Paul	Intermediate high	Indonesian	Indonesian	Yes
4.	Jessica	Intermediate mid	Indonesian	Indonesian and English	Yes
5.	Ann	Intermediate mid	Indonesian	English	Yes
6.	Gwen	Intermediate mid	Indonesian	English and Indonesian	Yes
7.	Jane	Intermediate mid	Indonesian	English and Indonesian	Yes
8.	Marsha	Intermediate mid	Indonesian	English and Indonesian	Yes
9.	Max	Novice high	Indonesian and English	English and a bit of Indonesian	Yes
10.	Amanda	Novice high	Indonesian	English and Indonesian	Not sure
11.	Bryan	Novice low	Indonesian and English	English	No
12.	Bradley	Novice low	Indonesian	English	No
13.	Bethany	Novice low	Indonesian	English	Not sure
14.	Carissa	Novice low	Indonesian	passive Indonesian and mostly English	No
15.	Larry	Very limited, passive understanding	a mix of English and Indonesian	passive Indonesian and mostly English	No
16.	Susan	Very limited, passive understanding	Indonesian	English	No

Four of the sixteen participants were considered Generation 1.5<sup>1</sup>. Two of them both spoke fluent colloquial Indonesian. Two others who were siblings spoke Indonesian at intermediate-high (Paul) and intermediate-mid levels (Jane). The second-generation participants consist of four at intermediate-mid, two at

novice-high, and four at novice-low levels. The last two barely spoke Indonesian.

**Data Collection**

This study used qualitative method and combined a range of data collection methods such as ethnographic participant observation, in-depth interviews (including life history interviews) and written responses to the

<sup>1</sup> moved to the U.S. after seven years old.

researchers' questionnaires. Consent was obtained from the participants and their parents. The participants then completed personal data form and Indonesian Oral Proficiency Questionnaire. Their parents were also interviewed for triangulation of the interview results with the participants. Interviews were conducted in either English or Indonesian depending on the interviewee's language preference. Pseudonyms instead of participants' real names are used in this report.

### **Data Analysis**

Results of the interviews were transcribed and analyzed within the conceptual framework of identity and heritage language learning. The participants' decision to learn Indonesian may emerge out of having greater agency that drives them to choose to learn it. It may also be impacted by other actors and influencing factors (home language use, exposure to the HL and culture, and attachment to the home country and participants' social network through community engagement). These factors may either drive or limit the participants' decisions to learn Indonesian HL.

### **FINDINGS**

The research questions of this study concern (1) the influence of home language use and community involvement in the mastery of Indonesian HL, and (2) the factors that affect the youths in forming their cultural identity. Results of the questionnaires and interviews yielded findings concerning exposure to Indonesian language and culture, sense of affinity to Indonesia, pride in Indonesian values, and identity transformation.

#### **Exposure to Indonesian Language and Culture**

Parents played significant roles in providing their children with exposure to Indonesian language and culture. This exposure was also made possible by the presence of non-English speaking family members or nanny at their homes, parents' insistence and consistency in using Indonesian at home, regular trips to Indonesia, and active involvement in Indonesian communities in the U.S.

When the participants were still young, most parents spoke Indonesian with them. But as they were entering school, these parents were anxious that their children would struggle so they switched to English. Since then, their Indonesian diminished. Carissa, Ann, Paul and Jane lived with grandparents with no or limited English, and Gina lived with parents with limited English. These youths needed to interact in Indonesian at home. Other than grandparents and parents, two participants (Bryan and Susan) grew up with a live-in nanny who did not speak English. However, there was a big range of HL mastery among these participants. Bryan, Carissa and Susan were not comfortable speaking Indonesian even though they lived with non-English speaking people at home. Carissa's mother revealed that while the grandmother seldom left their

house, the conversation between Carissa and her grandmother was never beyond basic and daily routine words such as *sudah makan* 'have eaten', *mau pergi* 'want to go' and a very limited kitchen language. Furthermore, their conversations usually were conducted in two languages. The grandmother spoke to Carissa in Indonesian and Carissa responded in English. Interestingly, some Indonesian words that remained within participants' diminishing mastery were motherese such as *bobok* 'sleep'. The data reveal that the presence of non-English speaking people at home was not a factor that contributed to the participants' mastery of Indonesian. Other participants have gained from living in a similar situation and maintained their Indonesian by acting as interpreters for their family members. Paul, Jane, and Gina lived with grandparents and parents with limited English proficiency. Their parents and grandparents often times needed their children or grandchildren to translate or interpret for them outside home. The non-English speaking family members' reliance on the participants to interpret compelled them to maintain their Indonesian to help connect their grandparents or parents to the outside world.

When there are no non-English speaking people at home, parents' commitment and consistency in using HL as home language enabled the second generation to maintain their HL. Fanny was born in the U.S. Her parents went to the U.S. to get master's degree. When Fanny was two, they returned to Indonesia and settled in Jakarta. When Fanny was seven, they moved back to the U.S. for better jobs. When being interviewed, Fanny used Indonesian with some Javanese accent and vocabulary. Her colloquial Indonesian was very fluent. Both of her parents insisted on speaking Indonesian at home, believing that being bilingual was always an advantage. For Fanny's father, mastery of an additional language gave practical benefits:

*Kalau kita kan bahasa itu suatu aset walaupun bahasa apapun. Kan enak kalau ini kita, kalau ngomong mau rahasia, sudah ngomong Indonesia, jarang orang tahu.*

For us, language is an asset, whatever language it is. It is a convenience to be able to talk about something private in Indonesian, that few people [in the US] know. (Herman; Interview May 27, 2016)

When they just came back in the U.S., they were worried that Fanny might struggle in school so they used a little English to help her with schoolwork, but they did not let their worry impede their daughter's HL maintenance. They simply would not respond to Fanny when she used English with them. Fanny's father compared their decision with another family's. They came to the U.S. when their child was older than Fanny, but the child was not able to speak Indonesian anymore because the parents did not use Indonesian out of fear that the child would not do well in school. At the time of the interview, Fanny was doing her Master's program in Southern California. She grew up in Texas but did

her undergraduate program in Tennessee. She had very minimal contact with Indonesian communities. She was not able to attend their gatherings, usually done on Saturdays, because she observed Sabbath. Therefore, it can be concluded that Fanny's fluent Indonesian correlates to her parents' insistence on using Indonesian at home. This confirms Shin's finding which reveals that her participants attributed their lack of HL proficiency to their parents' and/or their own reluctance to use the HL (2010).

All of the first generation in this study made regular trips to Indonesia either for family or business purposes. Some second-generation participants did, too. Bradley and his sister Bethany loved visiting exotic islands in Indonesia. While visiting the heritage country can provide an opportunity to improve one's language, during their vacations in Indonesia, Bradley and Bethany hardly spoke Indonesian because their Indonesian cousins as well as people in touristic areas were able to speak English. Gwen's and Marsha's parents still saw Indonesia as a place full of business opportunities. Therefore, they sent Gwen and Marsha at least once a year there. Gwen did her internship in Indonesia every summer for the past three years while Marsha went to Indonesia at least twice a year to run her family business in Jakarta. Jessica and Fanny saw Indonesia as a land that opens up their horizons. Jessica visited Indonesia for a summer internship and participated at an Indonesian immersion class while Fanny led a group of American students from her church for a summer mission every year. While vacationing in Indonesia seemed to have done little in improving their Indonesian, internship, summer mission and business visits certainly managed to reinforce the participants' motivation to learn and expand their HL.

Because of the relatively large Indonesian population in California, almost all of the first generation in this study still maintained contact with Indonesian communities in varying degrees. Some of them played a very active role to the extent that they became the main players in their community. They organized Indonesian community events and gatherings, and published Indonesian print media. Although their parents' involvement did not appear to have any impact on the children's motivation to learn the HL, it did strengthen their Indonesian-ness. When they were younger, the children tagged along with the parents to those community activities where the parents gathered and spoke Indonesian while their young children entertained themselves and spoke with each other in English. When they grew up, the youths began to feel detached. The children's refusal to be involved with the Indonesian communities did not denote their denial of their Indonesian heritage but rather marked the end of their childhood and entry into adulthood by departing from parental association.

### **Sense of Affinity to Indonesia**

In addition to providing exposure to Indonesia, the frequent trips also formed some participants' sense of

affinity to the homeland. They favorably reminisced the vacations and moments of togetherness with their relatives in Indonesia. Visits to the homeland or growing up in the homeland for Gina, Fanny, Paul and Jane were part of their pleasant childhood memories that gave them a sense of affinity to Indonesia. Even participants whose Indonesian was at the novice low level expressed their love for Indonesia.

What participants liked the most about Indonesia were the people, the culture, and the food. Indonesian people are warm and genuine. Bethany did not speak Indonesian comfortably but she always loved the trips to Indonesia. Similarly, Paul expressed his sense of affinity to Indonesian culture:

I don't know how to say it's like *kalau* [when] around Indonesian people I feel more at home so all the aspects of the culture feels more natural and more familiar, *kalau disini Paul juga suka tapi* [here I like it, too but] if I had to choose [to] live here or live in Indo, I'd definitely live here. *Tapi kaya cuma* [but in terms of] everyday life, the culture and the environments, I prefer Indo.

Paul also stated that speaking Indonesian was important:

we see people from Indo [Indonesia] all the time and Indo is like the fourth most populous country in the world so that's pretty important. *Jadi ya* [Therefore], besides just getting closer to the community, I think it would be helpful to just to know [Indonesian] because like today I did an essay about how important it is to be multilingual so yeah even though English is more like the mainstream language, I argue that Indonesian is important because it is more versatile.

Although participants' HL proficiency and exposure to the HL and culture differ greatly, they all shared the same sense of affinity through food. All of them loved Indonesian food. Their mothers cooked Indonesian food at home and they missed it when they were away. Indonesian food was indeed most participants' favorite food. The first thing they mentioned when inquired about things related to Indonesia they liked the most, their first response was always its foods, as reflected in this interaction with Paul.

I: *Kalau lama nggak pergi*, what do you miss the most?  
Paul (P): *Makanannya*.

Researcher (R) When you haven't visited Indonesia for a while, what do you miss the most?  
P: The foods.

Even when she could easily find Indonesian food in LA, according to Gwen, Indonesian food in LA tasted different from the ones in Indonesia. She could not figure out the cause. The possible causes may be related to the spices and ingredients of the foods, different surrounding atmosphere, or the interaction with loved ones over the food. Gwen stated, "Back

before I came to Berkeley and met all the great people that is BISA [Berkeley Indonesian Students Association], there were only two things that kept me going back to Indonesia every year: the family and THE FOOD.”

Gwen noticed the habit from her family custom, which she thought as typical Indonesian: “I notice that you go somewhere to travel, always bring something [food] back.” This habit conforms to Indonesian tradition of bringing *oleh-oleh* (small gifts from other places). The *oleh-oleh* were mostly Indonesian snacks brought home after travel to Indonesia. Away from home now, Gwen missed the snacks her Indonesian relatives or families brought when they came back from Indonesia. The way participants expressed their love for Indonesian food and relationships with families and friends indicates that they have a strong attachment to Indonesia. Their sense of affinity to Indonesia still lingers on. Their HL may diminish, but nevertheless their Indonesian-ness persists.

### **Pride in Indonesian Values and Culture**

The participants realized that Indonesia and its culture would always be a part of their identity. They may be accustomed to American culture and more comfortable speaking English, but they would never forget that Indonesia and its cultures are a part of their lives. This was reflected from the way they identify whether some of their habits as more American or more Indonesian. Our participants considered some Indonesian ways of treating people are better compared to American ways. Gwen mentioned that Indonesians are nosy but they care about people. Indonesians value politeness and friendliness.

Bethany explicitly mentioned how she was proud of being Indonesian in spite of her low HL proficiency. On the subject of maintaining the tie to Indonesia in the future, Bethany thought:

I think they are important to me. I actually I am really proud of being Indonesian. ... I don't know, I think it's really interesting, I know, when I tell people that I am from there. I think there is like cool, and last summer Bradley brought his girlfriend and I brought my best friend there, so it was really cool, like to show them our culture and they will like, I just think our culture is really fancy and a lot different from other culture or other people. Not a lot of people know it, so I think it will be cool to share to other people I think ... I would probably go back.

Bethany thought that she might want to go back and work in Indonesia. The thought of visiting Indonesia's beautiful islands and enjoying different foods in Indonesia make her happy. She felt it was good to be different, and she could share to others what she knows.

### **Identity Transformation**

Having lived and educated in the U.S., the participants would in fact identify themselves as being more

American than Indonesian. When Bethany was asked whether she identified herself as American or Indonesian, she was more tactful in her reply. She said it depended on where she was and with whom she was talking with. Even though without hesitation she admitted that she was an American, Bethany did not deny that she was also Indonesian, as reflected in her following responses.

Bethany (B): Ehm.. I mean I don't really. I don't necessarily forget who I am, but it's just because we are not really talking about like ethnicity exactly. But, I mean I should know like I'm Indonesian.

R: Yeah.. But you also feel that you're American?

B: Right.

R: When you're among your cousins in Surabaya, ehm.. do you still feel Indonesian or do you feel that you are different from them?

B: Right, that's a good point. Ehm.. I would say... I would say, when I was with my cousins, I feel a lot more American. I guess I would say that I would. I am a lot more American because or just like where I am from. Cause I know I do travel to Indonesia every summer but it's not more like I am... If I am very fluent in the language, I would feel like I fit in there.

The fact that Bethany felt more American when she was among her cousins in Indonesia was due to her difficulty in joining their Indonesian conversations. Her Indonesian was not as fluent as the other participants as she used English more than Indonesian when she was in the U.S. Thus, she did not have extensive Indonesian vocabulary and could not express herself well in the HL. Bethany's responses indicate how her limited use of Indonesian could affect her identity. Therefore, she said that had she been more fluent in Indonesian, she would feel more Indonesian. Although Bethany had quite a few Indonesian friends at school, she admitted that she did not often talk with them.

Our participants who happened to be of Chinese descent hesitated to identify themselves with their Chinese ethnicity. Marsha who was born in the U.S. and made frequent business trips to Indonesia, for instance, did not consider herself Chinese:

M: Ehm, yeah I don't usually include Chinese. That's because I don't know it's not ehm... so ehm yeah I usually just say I am Indonesian.

Marsha acknowledged that she felt more Indonesian since she knew the culture more than the Chinese heritage culture. She could not identify herself with Chinese identity since she did not have any cultural linkage with China or Chinese anymore. Furthermore, she did not speak Chinese nor have the intention of learning Chinese. Marsha's relation to Indonesian culture was stronger. The fact that she continued learning Indonesian and was close with her Indonesian friends did show her attachment to Indonesia.

Similarly, Max rather identified himself as Indonesian-American than Chinese-American. Without hesitation he considered himself Indonesian although he did not speak Indonesian fluently.

Other participants' similar responses show that they perceived themselves as Indonesian-Americans. They enthusiastically hyphenated their American with Indonesian. Hyphenated identity is commonly done by Americans who trace their ancestry to another ethnic group such as Chinese-Americans, Japanese-Americans, and African-Americans. Our participants' preference to label themselves as Americans of Indonesian descent demonstrates that their identity transformation to become Americans went smoothly but their Indonesian-ness remains. Interestingly, they did not feel strongly about adding Chinese to their new identity.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Home Language Use and Community Involvement**

The need of and the parents' insistence on using Indonesian at home led to Indonesian HL maintenance. Living with non-English speaking people at home may have encouraged the use of Indonesian by HLLs. However, the presence of non-English speaking family members was not automatically the *sine qua non* of participants' mastery of Indonesian HL. The limited English speaking nanny and grandmother did not enable Bryan, Susan and Carissa to speak fluent Indonesian. Their Indonesian conversations were limited to very simple daily routine phrases pertaining to eating and food. Furthermore, their conversations most often than not included two languages. The grandmother spoke to Carissa in Indonesian and Carissa responded in English. On the other hand, living with non-English speaking family members who relied on their assistance to interpret as in the case of Paul, Jane, and Gina, supported their language maintenance. This task positioned them as their families' bridge to the outside world and necessitated them to maintain their Indonesian. This finding is consistent with results in other studies that participants' role as interpreters helps them acquire their HL.

Furthermore, parents' insistence on using Indonesian at home resulted in the mastery of Indonesian HL. Many of the parents did not leave the HL learning to their children alone, but they invested in their HL use. This is in line with Norton's (2013) claims that high level of motivation did not necessarily translate into good language learning. During the children's formative years, the parents' investment in using Indonesian with them did not only improve their children's HL skill but also instilled a stronger sense of heritage identity in them. This investment later resulted in the youths' attempt to maintain their HL by continuing to speak it as in the case of Paul, Jane, Gina, and Fanny.

It has been extremely difficult for second-generation Indonesian-Americans to achieve a high level of proficiency in their HL. The two most

significant reasons are the relatively small size of Indonesian-American population and the lack of importance the wider society places on the maintenance of Indonesian as HL. Firstly, unlike the bigger immigrant groups who managed to organize Saturday/Sunday HL Schools, the Indonesian communities are either too small or too spread-out to make such schools efficient and effective. The spread of the Indonesian communities is apparent not only geographically but also in different sub communities, grouped by ethnicity, religious affiliation, and hometown origin. Secondly, the societal attitude that undermines Indonesian prevails within the mainstream Americans who have no or little knowledge of Indonesia. Worse, this attitude is also shared by many of Indonesian-American families who believe that learning Indonesian HL is not worth the investment. Even though the first generation of Indonesian-Americans in California in this study were involved in Indonesian communities, their involvement did not support the second generation's Indonesian HL acquisition. The children's involvement usually stopped when they reached adolescence. When they went to Indonesian community gatherings, the children usually hung around with their peers and spoke English to each other. Rich exposure to Indonesian language and people at the community events did not motivate them to speak the HL. The Indonesian-American communities are yet to organize Saturday/Sunday HL classes that reach bigger community to maintain and improve their children's HL.

To answer the first research question regarding the relationship between home language use and HL, children's mastery of HL relies on parents' investment and insistence on using Indonesian at home with their children. Parents who spoke Indonesian with each other or with another non-English speaking family member but did not insist on engaging their children in Indonesian did not make the second generation in this study master the HL. In fact, as Table 1 indicates, all parents in this study spoke Indonesian at home, but only few insisted on speaking Indonesian with their children all the time. It is interesting to note that the participants' investment in the learning of HL is also related to their home language use and their level of Indonesian proficiency. When asked whether they would enroll in an Indonesian course, those with Indonesian mid to advanced levels of proficiency and spoke Indonesian at home mostly answered 'Yes' whereas those with low proficiency were not interested in advancing their HL skill. The participants' investment in HL is reflected not only in their desire to enroll in an Indonesian course but also in their involvement in Indonesian-student organized events on campus. Gwen and Max hung around with Indonesian students and got involved in the association's activities. On the other hand, parents' involvement in Indonesian community does not naturally lead their children to master the HL. Without strong HL investment, the second-generation Indonesian immigrants only had

passive understanding of the HL or had very minimal ability to speak the HL. These participants—Susan, Bryan, Bradley, Bethany, Carissa, Amanda, and Max—as a matter of fact, have parents who are actively engaged in Indonesian community activities in their areas.

### **Factors Affecting Cultural Identity**

The second research question—what factors affect these youths in forming their cultural identity—posits three factors to discuss: exposure to the language and culture, investment, and community factors.

Canagarajah and Silberstein (2012) argue that language shift is not always a manifestation of ethnic self-rejection. Similarly, the results of our study show that participants' claim of being Indonesian does not correspond with their Indonesian proficiency levels. All participants including those with low proficiency HL acknowledged their attachment to Indonesian heritage. This finding is consistent with Fishman (2001), Van Deusen-Scholl (2003), and Hornberger and Wang (2007) who determine the ancestral ties—rather than high HL proficiency—as their connection to their heritage culture. They may know none, little, or much of the HL, but they strongly claim to be a part of the heritage culture. Growing up in Indonesian home provided the participants with a lot of exposure to Indonesian language and culture. Indonesian food, regular visit to Indonesia, and community involvement helped establish the sense of being Indonesian like Amanda, who did not speak Indonesian comfortably, but said “I understand the culture of Indo [Indonesian] and how the people are. And I guess it just grows in me.” This exposure to Indonesian culture, however, did not naturally lead to the mastery of the HL.

The second factor affecting cultural identity is the learners' investment. Although lack of HL mastery does not prevent learners from identifying themselves as Indonesian, this study finds that HL mastery level corresponds to their investment into learning or expanding their HL and hence the strength of their attachment to Indonesian culture. Most participants with intermediate to advanced HL proficiency were eager to enroll in an Indonesian course given the chance. Furthermore, they expressed more enthusiasm when identifying themselves as Indonesian and showed great interest in being connected to other Indonesians. Members of second-generation immigrants tend to find it hard to connect with their fellow students who come from their parents' home country as studies on Korean-Americans by Lee (2002) and Kang (2013) found. Likewise, participants in this study felt that linguistic and cultural barrier inhibited their interaction with international students who came from Indonesia because they did not share the same interests, lifestyles, values, habits, and norms. While distancing themselves from Indonesian friends or community, their hyphenated identity as Indonesian-Americans made them explore their own space that exists between their Indonesian and American identities. Participants with higher Indonesian

proficiency tend to associate with friends from Indonesia better. They put more efforts into being part of the Indonesian student circles such as the Indonesian student associations on their campuses as in the case of Paul, Gwen, and Max. Meanwhile those with lower HL proficiency attempted in varying degrees to be connected but fell through. Hanging around Indonesian friends, these HLLs had to overcome their embarrassment of being teased because of their peculiar accent and incorrect word choices as well as put up with different interests, lifestyles and norms. This process required resilience on their part as well as adequate proficiency. A few participants who demonstrated their investment in heritage language and culture like Marsha, Jessica, Gwen and Fanny actively seek out opportunities to spend a considerable amount of time in Indonesia through summer programs or business internships. Therefore, the strength of their attachment to the heritage culture also grows along with their mastery of Indonesian language. This is consistent with Norton's (2013) claim that when learners invest in a language, they believe that this language will provide access to material resources (money, goods and real estate) and symbolic resources (language, friendship and education). In this study, the participants also believed that their investment would lead to material resources in the form of better business and career opportunities and yield symbolic resources such as friendships and reconnection with family members in Indonesia.

The last significant factor that affects cultural identity is community factors. Participants who actively seek out opportunities to form friendship with Indonesians in turn provided for themselves community support in their journey to identify further with their heritage culture and construct their bilingual and bicultural identity. This finding is in line with the findings of Dixon et al. (2012) that language community also had an effect on children's ethnic language vocabulary; this may reflect community support for ethnic language within the broader community. During their interactions with Indonesian friends, the participants used both Indonesian and English. This situation put both sides as learners and language/culture input models for each other. Once they passed through their stage of shyness and embarrassment, they advanced toward understanding the heritage language and culture better and transforming their bicultural identity.

### **CONCLUSION**

The aim of this study is to explore the intersection between home language use and community involvement and mastery of HL and cultural identity among second-generation Indonesian-Americans in California. This study reveals that investment in maintaining Indonesian HL at home led to higher HL proficiency among HLLs while determining community support is the HLLs' own choice, not their parents'.

This study also shows that all HLLs identified themselves as Indonesian despite their varying proficiency levels but the higher their proficiency level was, the more they would invest in learning Indonesian language and culture. Limitations of this study include (1) individual differences among the HLLs and their parents were not analyzed; (2) it may be hard to generalize the findings from this particular group of HLLs to those with different backgrounds in other contexts.

This study puts forward several implications. First, parents need to be educated about the merits of bilingualism and the importance of home language use to promote HL. Second, HLLs need community-based HL programs to engage them in a range of communicative repertoire in the Indonesian language and culture with peers. Finally, community-based HL programs may collaborate with university-based HL programs in efforts to maintain Indonesian as HL among Indonesian diaspora.

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