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MANCHU ABROAD: IDENTITY RECOGNITION AND LANGUAGE REVIVAL AMONG GLOBAL DESCENDANTS

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Abstract

The Manchu language and traditions have become popular abroad in recent years. In a multicultural environment, examining the identity construction of overseas Manchu descendants and their language revival practices helps to understand the interactive connection between identity and language use. It provides critical references for protecting and inheriting endangered languages. This study is based on the investment, agency and imagined community theory in the comprehensive framework of Li (2022). The research adopts a qualitative research method and uses interviews to observe how Manchu descendants build their identity elsewhere in a multicultural environment and assess the challenges and strategies they face in the process of language revival.

The research found that the language investment of overseas Manchu descendants is a confirmation and reshaping of identity. However, learning and using Manchu frequently encounters practical problems due to the host country's social and cultural constraints. In the effort to revive language and cultural communication, Manchus also face problems like discrimination and cultural marginalization. The research shows that the global Manchu online community has played an important role in the language revival process, giving learners a system for community support and resource sharing and promoting social relationships among Manchu descendants worldwide.

Keywords: Manchu Language Revitalization, Identity Construction, Global Manchu Online Communities, Endangered Language Immigrants, Language Investment

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1. Introduction

More and more people have started to understand the value of linguistic diversity due to the rise in standards and non-governmental organizations dedicated to preserving endangered languages. Protecting endangered languages is no longer just the duty of governmental agencies. People's growing knowledge of language survival is reflected in the increase of more non-governmental organizations. Preserving endangered languages is a priority for platforms like the Endangered Languages Project (ELP). On International Mother Language Day 2025 (UNESCO 2025), ELP frequently hosts language and cultural events, including Stories of Language and Life. Local language recordings, like the well-known NYC map (ELA 2025), are a part of the Endangered Language Alliance (ELA). The preservation of endangered languages is on the rise in popularity.

People save endangered minority languages like Manchu in China through several strategies. The Manchus are a minority ethnic group in China, and their predecessor was the Jurchens. There are fewer than 20 native Manchu speakers worldwide, according to data from the Endangered Languages Project (2024). As reported by UNESCO (2024), there is a population of 10 to 99 people who speak the Manchu language worldwide. Despite variations in data across multiple websites, all sources consistently indicate that the number of Manchu speakers is exceedingly limited. Kane (1997: 231) stated that while many students of Altaic languages may feel that Manchu has been extinct or is only spoken in a few isolated regions, there is an exciting Manchu revivalism in China. According to Professor Kai Guan, an increasing number of young Manchus are learning the Manchu language and caring about Manchu culture, reflecting a resurgence of Manchu identity (China News Service 2016).

Despite a growing interest in learning Manchu, the prospects for its revival remain bleak. A significant number of Manchus were compelled or willingly relinquished their cultural and ethnic identity. During the early to mid-20th century, the Manchu identity faced prejudice and oppression as a result of historical circumstances. Due to anti-Manchu propaganda during the Republic of China period, the term "Manchu" became a stigma (Bai 2008: 4). Bai (2008: 5) points out that, although Premier Zhou Enlai restored the Manchu identity after the founding of the People's Republic of China, a large number of Manchus still chose to conceal their Manchu identity during the identification of ethnic minorities in the 1960s. In the post-Mao era, the status of the Manchus was still very embarrassing. A Manchu official said in an interview that just one Manchu official embraced his Manchu identity and was prepared to contribute to the Manchu community, while other Manchu authorities were reluctant to admit their ethnicity (Bai 2008: 12). Many Manchu descendants continue

to have doubts about their cultural and ethnic identity. Some descendants have no awareness of inheriting culture and protecting language. In a study conducted by Sun (2023: 56), it was discovered that the Manchu students residing in Liaoning, China, hold a positive outlook toward the endangered status of the Manchu language. They believe that language protection policies will be implemented, and they do not perceive it as their responsibility.

The language policy of mainland China and the lack of structured instruction for the Manchu language pose challenges to its protection and advancement of the Manchu language. Mainland China's policy of promoting Mandarin has virtually eliminated language barriers and improved interregional understanding. However, this tight language policy has adversely impacted all minority languages. The Mandarin language achieved a penetration rate of 80.72% in China in 2021, as reported by the Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China (2021). The Chinese government aims to reach a nationwide Mandarin penetration rate of 85% by 2025 (Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China 2021). The government mandates that the Ministry of Education and all pertinent ministries closely comply with this objective and will carry out periodic inspections. Consequently, the language education opportunities available to minority families have become more limited. As noted by Zhao (2016: 47), China's present national language policy perpetuates the marginalization of minority languages.

1.1 Revitalization: The Role of Sibe Language

In the decades following the 1911 Revolution that overthrew the Manchu dynasty, which had ruled China for nearly 300 years, Mandarin Chinese thoroughly outcompeted Manchu, even in the forested northeast, where Manchu had been its stronghold (Jacobs 2016). Manchu survived in the Qapqal Sibe Autonomous County near the border with Kazakhstan. The Sibe's isolation from the outside world in this arid, remote area helped keep the language alive, although its existence was all but forgotten until the 1940s (Jacobs 2016). Manchu gradually died out in northeastern China, but Manchu immigrants to western China more than 200 years ago preserved the language. In 1764, thousands of extremely loyal and renowned horsemen followed the emperor's call and began a long journey with their families and livestock from northeastern China to the farthest edge of the Qing Empire, in the Central Asian region now known as Xinjiang (Jacobs 2016). These Manchu immigrants are now the Sibe people. Currently, numerous Manchu language courses and revival initiatives are inextricably linked to the Sibe people and the Sibe language.

Nowadays, most online Manchu courses, Manchu textbooks, or physical Manchu courses

include both Manchu and Sibe languages. For example, the spoken language course offered by the Manchu Studies Group website is called Spoken Sibe Courses, and the name of a Manchu textbook is *The Foundations of Colloquialism in Xibo and Manchu*. Sibe holds considerable importance for the revitalization of Manchu. Nevertheless, the Sibe people, having resided in northwest China for an extended period, have incorporated a significant number of foreign terms into their language. Sibe progressively developed from Manchu, incorporating vocabulary from Uyghurs, Kazakhs, Mongolians, and even Russians traversing Xinjiang. Sibe has absorbed nouns such as pomodoro (tomato), mashina (sewing machine) and alma (Uyghur for apple) (Jacobs 2016). Nonetheless, Sibe is a descendant of the Manchu and preserves the majority of its grammatical characteristics (Ying 2021: 198). Consequently, there remains contention about whether Sibe constitutes a genuine Manchu language or merely a dialect of Manchu. The written form of Sibe closely resembles ancient Manchu (Stary 2003: 82). This is one reason many Manchu and Sibe courses utilize ancient Manchu texts for written instruction and spoken Sibe for oral instruction. It is undeniable that the revival of the Manchu language cannot be separated from the support of the Sibe language.

1.2 Overseas Development of Manchu

In the present era of fast globalization, many people have joined the global immigrant population as a result of the ongoing wave of immigration. Based on data provided by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the total number of people living in countries other than their country of birth is estimated to be 281 million in 2020, an increase of 128 million from 1990 (McAuliffe & Triandafyllidou). The phenomenon of immigration waves and the process of globalization have both contributed to the facilitation of cultural dissemination. The immigration wave has promoted international cultural exchanges, and more and more universities have begun to pay attention to multicultural education. Manchu as a minority language and endangered language in China, overseas universities offering Manchu courses can better promote cultural exchanges and understanding. Several universities worldwide, including Harvard University in the United States, University of Toronto in Canada, and Heidelberg University in Germany, have also opened courses on the Manchu language. International interests enhance the study of Chinese Manchu culture, collaboratively examining the deterioration of Manchu heritage (Bai 2008: 10). The topics of immigrant language and identity have been widely discussed in the field of sociolinguistics for a considerable period.

The revival of Manchu overseas seems to have potential. The availability of Manchu courses is gradually expanding globally. Dr. Veronika Zikmundová is a Manchu and Sibe language expert at

Charles University. According to the Charles University website, Dr. Veronika Zikmundová offers dozens of courses, including Manchu and Sibe courses at different levels and cultural courses (Charles University 2025). Dr. Veronika Zikmundová and Dr. Kicengge (Chengzhi) of Otemon Gakuin University jointly offer the Spoken Sibe online Sibe Manchu course. This course is offered every year, and some of the teaching information is announced through the Manchu Studies Group website. The Manchu Studies Group also provides information on various Manchu courses. For example, according to Manchu Studies Group (2025), In the summer of 2022, He Bian (Princeton) and David Porter (McGill University) offered online Manchu courses at the introductory and advanced levels. In the summer of 2021, He Bian (Princeton) offered an online Manchu translation workshop for researchers with previous knowledge of Manchu (Manchu Studies Group 2025). In addition, Harvard University provides Manchu language classes ranging from beginner to advanced levels (Harvard University). YouTube offers several up-to-date Manchu language courses (YouTube). Although there is no specific numerical data showing the increase in the number of Manchu language courses worldwide, the potential for the overseas revival of Manchu cannot be ignored. These courses indicate a growing interest in Manchu, an endangered language.

1.3 Research Objectives and Questions

Currently, the resurgence of the Manchu language and culture abroad is advancing gradually, more and more overseas Manchus are beginning to attach importance to the study of the Manchu language. Investigating the identification of abroad Manchu within the multicultural context of the host country, alongside the examination of the overseas resurgence of the Manchu language, will facilitate the revitalization of the Manchu language and culture. Therefore, this study examines the identity recognition and language revitalization practices of overseas Manchu descendants in a multicultural environment. Specifically, this study focuses on the following issues: Initially, explore how overseas Manchu descendants construct their national identity and the interactive relationship between their identity and language use; subsequently, show the challenges and strategies they face in the process of language revival; finally, summarize the language revival experience of overseas Manchu descendants, and provide theoretical support and practical reference for the protection and inheritance of endangered languages This study proposes three research questions:

1. How do different levels of Manchu language knowledge in the Manchu language affect the ethnic self-identification of Manchu immigrants and overseas descendants?
2. How do Manchu immigrants and overseas descendants construct and maintain their ethnic identity in their host countries?
3. For Manchu immigrants, does the potential for the spread and revitalization of

the Manchu language hold more promise overseas compared to mainland China?

This study consists of seven chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the research background, explains the current situation of Manchu revival and the fact that the number of overseas Manchu courses has increased, and proposes the objectives and research questions of this study. The study will concentrate on the factors that affect the identity of overseas Manchu descendants, the obstacles faced by Manchu revival, and the role of the global Manchu online community in Manchu revival. Chapter 2 reviews three areas related to the identity construction and language revitalization of overseas Manchu descendants. The literature review helps to understand the academic background of this study. This chapter discusses and summarizes previous related studies, and the gaps in this research field are proposed. Chapter 3 delineates the research methodologies, encompassing the specific research process, theoretical Framework, the participants of the study, and the data analysis methods. This study used a qualitative research method, conducting in-depth, one-on-one semi-structured interviews with ten abroad Manchu descendants from various nations and diverse cultural backgrounds. Chapters 4 to 6 are about data presentation and analysis. The themes of these three chapters are language learning, language use and social experience. Chapter 7 presents the study's conclusion, limitations, and recommendations for future research.

2. Literature Review

I reviewed existing research on Manchu language, Chinese immigrant studies, and endangered language revitalization and found that these studies usually focus on Manchu identity and language revitalization in mainland China and Chinese immigrants' identity and language inheritance. However, existing research still pays limited attention to overseas Manchu immigrants. Therefore, this study aims to fill the gap in this field and reveals the attitudes of overseas Manchus towards language and identity, the challenges they encounter, their requirements, the motivations for their immigration, and strategies for revitalizing the overseas Manchu language. By doing so, this study can provide a more comprehensive perspective on the research of Manchu overseas communities.

Section 2.1 reviews the current research on the Manchu and Manchu language. Specifically, it includes the process of Manchu assimilation, the reasons for the endangerment of the Manchu language, the Manchu language online revival, the differences and connections between Sibe and Manchu, and the identity of the descendants of the Manchu in mainland China. Section 2.2 discusses the current identity and language education of overseas Chinese immigrants. Section 2.3 discusses key factors for the revitalization of endangered languages.

2.1 Manchu and Manchu Language Research

The majority of research on Manchu and the Manchu language focuses on the language policy of Manchu in China, the present state of Manchu language usage in the Manchu Autonomous Region, the reasons why Manchu is endangered and the process of assimilation of Manchu by other ethnic groups. Research conducted by Zhao (2016) indicates how the adoption of assimilationist ideology and policies regarding the Chinese language has worsened the decline of the Manchu language. Zhao (2016: 57) observes that many Manchu speakers have been surrounded and assimilated by the Han majority in China, resulting in an almost exclusive language shift from Manchu to Mandarin. To thoroughly examine the intricate factors behind the disappearance of the Manchu language as a result of China’s language planning and policy (LPP), Zhao (2016: 47) employed Tollefson’s (1991) historical structural approach. This approach allowed for the analysis of language ideology, as well as the socio-political and economic context that contributed to and expedited the transformation of the language. Zhao’s (2016, 58) research highlights that primarily historical, social and political injustice contributed to the endangerment of the Manchu. Zhao (2016: 58) argues that the language policy for ethnic minority education should prioritize the protection of

human rights and the attainment of social justice, rather than being influenced by political sentiment.

Zhao and Zhang (2008: 135) found that the Manchus use Chinese at a rate of 99.99%. They investigated and studied the reasons for the endangerment of the Manchu language. Zhao and Zhang (2008) summarized the various reasons for the endangerment of the Manchu language. The first is social factors, including cross-ethnic communities, cross-ethnic marriages, and frequent interactions brought about by social prosperity. Multiple reasons have led to the weakening of the Manchu language. The second is the national psychological factor, that is, the Manchu descendants have given up the Manchu language. The third is the internal reason of the language. Zhao and Zhang (2008: 145) found that the Manchu language in Ilan Boo (Sanjiazi) Village has borrowed a large number of Chinese words, which has greatly impacted the morphology of the Manchu language.

Zhu et al. (2018: 1) conducted a study on Manchu and other related ethnic place names in Northeast China. They used spatial statistical methods and geographic information systems (GIS) to assess the distribution of these place names and the environmental factors that contributed to the decline of the Manchu language. Zhu et al. (2018: 10) found that in the areas where the ancestors of the Manchus lived before the Qing Dynasty, the Han population was larger than the Manchu population. The change in spatial pattern indicates that when the Manchu areas were occupied by the Han people, the Manchus would inevitably communicate with the Han people in Chinese rather than their native language.

Bai's (2008) study focused on the Manchu revival and online Manchu revival. Bai (2008: 24-25) mentioned that Chongnian Yan, a famous Chinese historian of Manchu studies, was beaten by a Majority of Chinese Han people during the release event of his book on the Manchu culture. The motive behind the attack was solely based on Mr. Yan's ethnicity as a Manchu. The attacker was hailed as a national hero online, and a large number of Han Chinese celebrated his heroic act (Bai 2008: 25). Many netizens are opposing Manchu websites. After Mr. Yan's incident, a large number of Manchu websites were also attacked by unidentified people. These websites were eventually forced to shut down or migrate to other IP addresses. The author was against Han chauvinism. In Bai's (2008: 24-26) study, it was discovered that Manchu websites faced difficulties due to discrimination and language attacks from the Majority Chinese Han community, stemming from ideological differences. This means that the revival of the Manchu language network in mainland China is difficult. Bai also analyzed the reasons for the long-term anti-Manchu sentiment in mainland China. The Chinese believed that the Manchus were culturally inferior because they came from the border areas. The continuous anti-Manchu sentiment after the fall of the Qing Dynasty is a manifestation of the Chinese

people's high collective self-esteem and strong sense of cultural superiority for thousands of years, which is "ethnocentrism" or "China-centrism" (Bai 2008: 28).

Fu (2024) discussed the distinctions and connections between Manchu and Sibe. Fu (2024: 30) discovered through research that the present spoken Sibe language contains a significant number of Manchu vocabularies, and its phonetic system closely resembles that of Shengjing South Manchu. If a Sibe person fluent in the Sibe language is requested to express himself entirely in written vocabulary and grammatical structures, the resulting expressions must closely resemble Shengjing South Manchu. This means that the Sibe people have preserved Shengjing South Manchu quite intact (Fu 2024: 30). Although the Sibe people have retained the use of Manchu, judging from their daily communication, Sibe has also retained a rich daily vocabulary and unique language habits belonging to the Sibe people. Fu (2024) presented numerous instances illustrating the distinctions between Sibe and Manchu.

Shengjing South Manchu	**Sibe**	**Jing Dialect**	**Standard Manchu**
aisin	aixin	aisin	aisin
ajig(e)	ajig	ajig(e)	ajige
alem(e)	(alem)	alami	alambi
ambe	ambu	anb(a)	amba
ameren	ameren	amulan	amuran

Table 1. Linguistic Variations in Beijing Manchu

Source: Aisin Gioro Yingsheng, "谈谈满语的京语 [A Discussion on Manchu Jing Dialect]," 满语研究 [Manchu Studies] 1991 (2): 5. Translated by Rao Yao.

Table 1 shows some of the differences in vocabulary between Manchu and Sibe in Aisin Gioro's (1991) study. Certain Sibe vocabulary exhibits significant similarity to standard Manchu, Shengjing South Manchu, and the Jing dialect, exemplified by terms such as aisin (gold), ajige (small), and amba (big). Alambi (to tell) and amuran (hobby) in standard Manchu are different from Sibe, which is closer to Shengjing South Manchu. Fu (2024) also analyzed the differences between spoken and written Manchu and Sibe. For instance, the Manchu term for conversing is bai leoleqembi, whereas the Sibe term is piyal sindambi (Fu 2024: 26). The difference in the interactive status is that the Manchu language, which was learned from each other, is taqindumbi, and the Sibe language is beye beye de taqimbi (bei beid taqim) (Fu 2024: 27). Fu (2024: 29) points out that the Sibe people lacked an independent writing system. Upon their integration into the Eight Banners of Manchuria, they encountered the writing system, leading the Sibe people to value the Manchu writing system.

The Sibe language eliminated the vowel v and the 12 consonants and the byte for the v spelling, and also made changes to the writing system and punctuation. The current Sibe writing system is very different from the Manchu language (Fu 2024: 30).

Sun (2023), Liang (2019), and Xia (2010) conducted case studies on the language and identity of Manchus in different regions of mainland China. A study by Sun (2023: 48) shows that some interviewed Manchu students (from Liaoning Province) believed that they had been assimilated by the Majority Chinese Han and were no different from the Han. In a study by Xia (2010: 122), it was found that many Manchu students (from Heilongjiang Province) actively acknowledged their Manchu identity and were proud of it. Recent studies have identified several policy-, social-, and individual-related factors contributing to the endangerment of the Manchu language, including China's unequal language policy, the ideology and discrimination, the assimilation of the Manchus by the Majority, and the Manchus themselves being forced or voluntarily giving up their identity and language. Nevertheless, there remains a dearth of studies regarding the progress and resurgence of the Manchu language in other countries, as well as the movement of Manchu descendants to overseas destinations. Conducting research on the study and development of Manchu overseas descendants and immigrants can significantly contribute to the advancement and revitalization of the Manchu language.

In my introduction, I mentioned that more and more overseas universities or organizations have established Manchu language courses. By reviewing the current research on the Manchu language and Manchu people, I found that there are very limited studies that can explain the overseas revival of the Manchu language and Manchu immigrants. The majority of Manchu studies concentrate on the Manchu population residing in mainland China. The increasing prevalence of overseas Manchu language classes and the underlying factors require further investigation and analysis. Do these phenomena indicate that an increasing number of abroad Manchu individuals have become cognizant of the need for cultural preservation and inheritance? Does it indicate that the population of abroad Manchu individuals is rising? The perspectives of overseas Manchu descendants about identity and culture, their acquisition of the Manchu language within a cross-cultural framework, and the exclusivity of overseas Manchu language courses as a method for the revival of the Manchu language are all subjects deserving of scholarly investigation. Comprehending the authentic circumstances and requirements of overseas Manchus will facilitate the resurgence of the Manchu immigrant and serve as a precedent for the revitalization of endangered languages abroad. The Manchu constitute a Chinese ethnic group and would be categorized as Chinese immigrants in immigration study classifications. The next subsection reviews current research related to language and identity

concerning Chinese immigrants.

2.2 Identity and Heritage Language of Overseas Chinese Immigrants

Regarding immigration study, most of the research on Chinese overseas migration has focused so far on immigrants living in Canada, the US, Singapore, Australia and other immigrant countries. Most studies on Manchu immigration focus on Manchu immigration from the late 19th century to the early 20th century, such as Suleski (1978) and Umeno (2014). There is still a lack of research on modern Manchu overseas immigrants, and most studies focus on Chinese immigrants.

Li et al. (2022 2023) conducted multiple studies on the bilingual education of Chinese immigrant children in Canada. The study by Li et al. (2023) examined the influence of early bilingual home literacy experiences on the biliteracy development of Chinese-Canadian first graders during COVID-19. The early reading skills of first-grade Chinese Canadian students were assessed by vocabulary tests administered in both Chinese and English. The researchers also surveyed parents, gathering data on family background, family literacy environment, and the parents' language proficiency. Li et al. (2023: 12) observed that the overall reading proficiency of first-grade Chinese children was equivalent to that of their peers; however, their English and Chinese vocabulary was inferior to that of their monolingual peers. As a result of the pandemic, there was an increase in digital devices and internet resources during the data collection phase (Li et al. 2023: 12). The advantages of digital gadgets and internet resources in facilitating bilingual education, particularly during the pandemic (Li et al. 2023: 13). Likewise, the studies conducted by Li et al. (2022: 2) demonstrated the influence of home literacy education on the early literacy skill development of Chinese Canadian children. Li et al. (2022: 5) focused on the families of four children, including three CBC children and one immigrant child. The findings indicated that parental appreciation for bilingual or multilingual education can influence the evolution of children's language abilities through family language policy. They also found that the bilingual education of most immigrant children depends on their family's bilingual education environment. Li et al. (2022: 2) highlight the fact that family language use and family language policies were found to affect the development of the target language.

Cheng (2015) explored the identity development of Chinese immigrants in Sweden. Cheng (2015) categorizes Chinese immigrants in Sweden into four distinct groups. Category II Chinese immigrant parents in Sweden (who immigrated as adults) and Category IV Chinese immigrant parents in Sweden (who identify as world citizens) prioritize Chinese traditional culture, values, and language inside the family (Cheng 2015: 37). Category II immigrants define themselves as Chinese, while

Category IV immigrants, although fully integrated into Swedish society, 80% have a strong sense of national pride. Category II and Category IV immigrants maintain a connection to the Chinese language and culture, aspiring for their descendants to acquire and perpetuate their values and language. Category I participants are second-generation immigrants who immigrated to Sweden with their parents. They believe that they belong neither to Sweden nor to China (2015: 38). Category III is immigrants who define themselves as dual identities. They have good Swedish language skills but find it difficult to truly integrate into Swedish society (2015: 31).

All endangered language minority immigrants may be lumped together with other ethnic groups due to factors such as nationality and region. This is not just a problem faced by the Manchu minority. The challenges faced by endangered language minority immigrants are enormous, and macro-immigration research cannot specifically analyze their particularities. Combining minority immigrants from endangered languages with other ethnic groups runs against their unique ethnic identities, diversity, and particular needs. Taras, Steel, and Kirkman (2016) argued the notion that a nation is synonymous with culture, highlighting that cultural boundaries do not invariably align with geographical or political boundaries. Focusing on national culture has appropriate applications, but its dominance in research has led to a lack of attention to other legitimate cultural organizational units (Taras, Steel and Kirkman 2016: 456). Currently, numerous research has examined the factors and motivations behind immigration. The study of Chinese immigration is relatively mature. According to Kurpaska (2010: 35), Chinese is divided into six major groups, namely Wu, Xiang, Hakka-Gan, Min, Yue, and Mandarin. Most of the research on Chinese overseas immigrant languages and Chinese minority languages is centered around these six groups. Relying solely on assumptions from Chinese immigration studies to examine Manchu immigration will ignore the genuine motivations behind Manchu emigration and their actual requirements abroad. There is scant research into the reasons and motivations that drive the ethnic groups of an endangered language to emigrate abroad. This research elucidates the social context and the merits and demerits of language policies and social security. I will thereafter examine it alongside research on the revitalization of endangered languages.

2.3 Research on the Revitalization of Minority and Endangered Languages

Many studies find that official language policy and family language policies are key factors in the revitalization of endangered languages. Research on the revitalization of endangered languages indicates that collaborative efforts across families, society, and government can foster more conducive conditions for language revitalization.

For endangered languages such as Manchu, the impact of family language policies on language use is particularly significant, especially in the context of historical stigmatization of these languages. Berardi-Wiltshire (2017) explored the importance of hometown in the maintenance and revitalization of minority languages, and particularly emphasized the role of family language policy in promoting intergenerational language transmission. Language use in the family provides valuable opportunities for the use of languages that were once stigmatized, and also contributes to language inheritance (Berardi-Wiltshire 2017: 333). She pointed out that the family environment is the place where minority languages are most likely to be used. In immigrant and Indigenous environments, traditional languages are usually confined to a few intimate environments and often lack prestigious and influential fields related to work, higher education, mass media and government. Berardi-Wiltshire (2007: 340) emphasizes that the family is one of the main actors in the revitalization of endangered languages and the inheritance of cultural heritage, and uses family language policies as a research template to further understand the factors that contribute to or hinder language revitalization.

For the revitalization of endangered languages, the language policies of national and local governments are particularly important. Official language policies can promote endangered languages through language education systems, public services, media communication and other means. Hornberger (1998: 452) believes that language policies oriented towards "language as a resource" can promote the revitalization and vitality of minority languages, that is, language policy itself is a resource. What determines the language usage pattern is not the number of speakers of this language, but their social status. On the other hand, her research also shows that language policy and language education can be used as tools to promote the vitality, versatility and stability of minority languages, and ultimately promote the power of these language users to participate in the global society in their own way (Hornberger 1998: 455). Atobatele and Mouboua (2024) discussed the role of education and social policies in supporting multilingualism and cultural diversity as assets in the integration process. Atobatele and Mouboua (2024: 856) claim that language change may lead to the weakening of language diversity, cultural knowledge and intergenerational inheritance within immigrant societies, threatening social cohesion and cultural continuity. Multilingual policies and integration policies that promote language learning and language revitalization initiatives can solve the problems caused by language change (Atobatele and Mouboua 2024: 856).

3. Methodology

As previously stated, Manchu has a limited number of speakers. Manchu is classified as a critically endangered language (UNESCO 2024). Since the overseas population of endangered language groups is far smaller than that of other ethnic groups, finding suitable research subjects faces great challenges. Unlike Chinese or Cantonese speakers who already have large communities overseas, the Manchu community has not formed a physical community abroad. I asked many relevant people, including the ten interviewees of this study, and everyone unanimously stated that there was no Manchu community in their country. At the same time, I was unable to find any relevant research on overseas Manchu communities, nor did I find any relevant information on the Manchu people establishing an independent community in a certain country or region. The difficulty of locating numerous participants in a particular region or country is substantial. Fortunately, overseas Manchu descendants have formed some online Manchu language communities through the Internet. Several participants in this study are acquainted in real life, however they reside in different countries and possess distinct cultural backgrounds. Consequently, this study considers these ten participants collectively, without differentiating them by geography, generation, or language proficiency. My research focuses on how they construct language and cultural identity and inheritance in the context of globalization.

In order to accomplish the research objectives of this study on the identity of overseas Manchu descendants and the strategy of Manchu language revival, I adopted a qualitative research method to obtain information from overseas Manchu descendants through semi-structured interviews. Section 3.1 is data collection. During the data collection stage, I conducted in-depth interviews with overseas Manchu descendants from various countries to gain a deeper understanding of their language use, identity construction, and actual practices and motivations for reviving the Manchu language. In Section 3.1.3 “Data Collection Process”, I will introduce in detail the methods and process of finding these participants. Data collection includes pre-interview questionnaires, interview design and themes, data collection process, data storage and data management ethics, and information about participants. Section 3.2 is data analysis. Data analysis includes the framework and theory used in this study and the data analysis process.

3.1 Data Collection

The data collection for this study consists of two main steps: pre-interview questionnaires

and semi-structured interviews. This data collection process can obtain a lot of valuable information, such as the experiences and views of overseas Manchu descendants in language learning, identity recognition and cultural revival. This section will introduce the specific process of data collection in detail, including the basic principles of questionnaire design, the theme framework of the interview, and the storage method of data to ensure the transparency and repeatability of the research method.

3.1.1 Pre-interview Questionnaire

This study set up a screening questionnaire (Pre-interview questionnaire) before the formal interview. The content of the questionnaire is shown in Appendix A. The questionnaire is designed to ensure that the respondents meet the research recruitment criteria and screen representative participants. My recruitment criteria for participants are as follows:

a) Real Manchu descendants living overseas (have or know their Manchu surnames and know their Manchu ancestors).

b) Have basic knowledge of the Manchu language or have sufficient knowledge of Manchu history.

c) Aged 18 and above.

My first selection criterion for participants was based on the researcher's desire to conduct research on real Manchu descendants, rather than "fake Manchus". Fake Manchus have always been a hot topic in mainland China. Many Han people self-declared themselves as Manchus through the use of bribery towards government officials, motivated by the "minority bonus system". Since the most Manchu descendants has been highly sinicized, according to Guan (2009: 2), it is difficult to distinguish between real and fake Manchus. Many social problems have emerged in the implementation of the policy of adding extra points to ethnic minorities in the college entrance examination, such as some "secret operations" in the college entrance examination, and some parents using money and power to tamper with the ethnic identity of candidates in order to get bonus points (Zhao 2024: 44). In fact, the majority of the population in many Manchu communities are Han (Guan 2009: 10). Consequently, the Manchu population was not small according to the census data, resulting in the real Manchus being neglected. There is an ironic contrast between the population size and the degree of neglect of the Manchus (Bai 2008: 4). "Fake Manchus" may not have the desire to pass on their language to a certain extent.

The second criterion involved language knowledge. Under this criterion, I did not require

participants to have Manchu language proficiency, as many Manchu people may have been forced not to use Manchu due to the failure of previous generations to pass on the language. However, I believe that participants should at least have some knowledge of the Manchu language or understand Manchu history. To assess this, I set relevant questions in the pre-interview questionnaire. Questions included asking whether they had ever been exposed to the Manchu language or whether they had some knowledge of Manchu history and culture. These questions helped me determine the basic level of participants' knowledge of the Manchu language and culture to ensure that the research subjects met the research objectives.

The third selection criterion included age: this study included participants aged 18 and above. I restricted the participation to those aged 18 and above. I believe that children and adolescents' understanding of heritage language and identity is likely to change as they grow older and gain life experience.

This questionnaire helped me prioritize respondents with diverse backgrounds, including Manchu descendants from different social backgrounds and with different identities, thereby improving the representativeness of the research. This questionnaire aims to identify respondents who fulfill the research criteria and to furnish foundational data for the following investigation of the identity and language acquisition of Manchu descendants. The content of the questionnaire involves the background information of the participants, their language proficiency, and their understanding of Manchu culture and history. Assessing the Manchu language proficiency of the respondents helps analyze the relationship between language mastery and cultural identity. Measuring the respondents' understanding of Manchu culture and history helps analyze the impact of cultural activities on identity.

3.1.2 Interview Design and Theme

This research employed a qualitative methodology using semi-structured interviews for data collection. According to Petty, Thomson, and Stew (2012: 3), structured interviews resemble questionnaires and provide superficial responses. Semi-structured interviews are conducted by covering several predetermined areas of interest and may provide prompts to help guide the conversation. This helps to enhance the richness, depth, comprehensiveness and honesty of the interview, which are important characteristics of a successful interview (Cohen et al. 2007:361). Lai (2018:53) states that the purpose of a qualitative interview is to allow participants to express their own opinions and understand their interpretations from the interview. The scope of the research questions included heritage language and identity definition. Research questions posed in this study

focus on eliciting Manchu's perspectives on their identities and self-identification strategies, the role of language in identity construction, the implications these processes have for the future of the Manchu language and its maintenance. To capture the complexity of Manchu perspectives on identity and language, semi-structured interviews are deemed the most suitable approach.

The interview topics are based on the three themes in Li's (2022) comprehensive framework: language learning, language use and social experience. The questions are based on the three theories in Li's (2022) comprehensive framework: investment, agency and imagined community. This framework is applicable to the analysis of immigrant identity. Li's (2022) comprehensive framework and the theories involved will be elaborated in detail in the "3.2.1 Framework and Theory" section of this chapter, and the applicability of language and identity theory in this study will be discussed. The outline of the interview questions is shown in Appendix B. The interview questions revolve around the following themes:

a) Linguistic repertoires and knowledge of the Manchu language (for descendants of the Manchus who can speak Manchu): This section is used to explore the Manchu language learning methods, motivations, resource acquisition channels and social support of the descendants of the Manchus who can speak Manchu.

b) Linguistic repertoires and knowledge of the Manchu language (for descendants of the Manchus who cannot speak Manchu): This section examines the reasons why descendants of the Manchus who are unable to speak Manchu lack proficiency in the language and their perspectives on acquiring it.

c) Identity and Social Experience: This section is used to explore the participants' daily language use, identity and social experience.

3.1.3 Data Collection Process

I adopted a targeted strategy to recruit participants. I initially disseminated recruitment information for participants using social media (REDnote, Instagram, Facebook, WeChat, QQ, and WhatsApp). I detailed the recruiting requirements, research objectives, methodologies, and duration of participation in the recruitment information. Because the overseas Manchu descendants are very scattered, there are very few Manchu descendants who can speak Manchu worldwide. I had a lot of pressure throughout the initial phases of recruitment.

My recruitment information was subsequently promoted on three platforms: Technica.ca, Job Board Nova Scotia and Novazuya. I also joined several Manchu language learning and cultural groups on WeChat, QQ and WhatsApp. Promotion on multiple social media and platforms attracted some Manchu people who were interested in my research. Ultimately, I identified 13 appropriate participants globally over 5 months (from July to the end of November 2024), of which 10 engaged in the interview while 3 canceled. Among the ten participants in this study, Wendy and Gigi were two Manchu descendants suggested to me by my friends. I contacted Tony, the Manchu culture and language Instagram content creator. I am also a Manchu learner, and I have been following Tony on Instagram for two years. He fulfilled the recruitment criteria and promptly joined the research. Tony referred his friend Higuchi to me after the interview. I found S.H, Helena, Cathy and Lina through the Manchu-language groups on WeChat and WhatsApp. Frank, Cathrine, and the three people who canceled the interview reached out to me via the online recruitment information (through REDnote and the information on the three platforms). Two of the three people who canceled the interview said that they could not confirm whether they would face the problem of privacy information exposure and canceled the interview. They articulated that, owing to the unique characteristics of the Manchu identity, they wished to avoid disrupting their lives. Another participant wanted to use a voice changer to protect her privacy when she was interviewed, but I was unable to contact this participant afterward.

All participants signed the informed consent form before the interview. Before the interview, each interviewee received the interview question outline template. I provided the interviewees with the informed consent form and interview question template in English and Mandarin, which helped the interviewees to have a clearer understanding of the research purpose and process of this study.

Due to the global distribution of the study participants, Zoom meetings were utilized for online interviews. The duration of the interview varied from 20 minutes to 1 hour. All participants met with me through online interviews. Despite the constraints of online video on my observation of the interviewees, they appeared relaxed and engaged in front of the camera. Cohen et al. (2007: 349) argue that for both interviewees and interviewers, dialogue can provide an opportunity to discuss in depth their interpretations of the world they inhabit and to express personal perspectives. To gain a comprehensive understanding of the genuine perspectives of Manchu people residing abroad regarding their cultural identity and linguistic heritage, engaging in dialogue with them is of utmost significance. The identity backgrounds of overseas Manchu people around the world are diverse. Since the participants come from different backgrounds, it is important to ask participants to share their life experiences in different countries and institutional environments (Li 2022: 33).

3.1.4 Data Storage and Data Management Ethics

In order to ensure the integrity and traceability of the data, this study took the following measures in terms of data storage:

1. Questionnaire data and interview recordings: The electronic version of all pre-interview questionnaires is stored in the cloud database (iCloud) and backed up to the researcher's local hard drive. The entire interview is recorded, and the audio files are stored in the researcher's cloud database (iCloud) and local hard drive and backed up on the mobile phone.

2. Interview text: All interview recordings are transcribed and stored as text files in Word format, which are only accessible to the researcher.

3. Analysis notes and coded data: The coding and data analysis documents used on the interview texts during the research process are stored in the cloud database (iCloud) and local hard drive. Analysis notes are handwritten on paper for the researcher to analyze data. The storage status of the interview texts and data analysis used for coding is checked every 2 days.

All respondents have detailed information about the storage, use and confidentiality of the data in the informed consent form. During the research, respondents can withdraw their authorization to use data at any time. Interview recordings will not share any interviewee's audio files with the outside world without authorization. For interview quotes, I only use the transcript and make sure to remove any sensitive information. The collected data was only accessible to me and used only for the purpose of this research. All participants in the data employed pseudonyms, code names, or English names instead of their actual names. Due to the unique identity of the Manchu people, the exact Manchu autonomous areas, counties, cities, or villages referenced by the participants in the data were kept hidden. The migration background and family background of some participants presented in the data were agreed upon by the participants.

3.1.5 Participants Information

Table 2 illustrates that the ten participants in this study originate from diverse cultural and migration backgrounds. Participants possess varied language backgrounds, with some being bilingual or multilingual native speakers. All participants were between 24 and 31 years old, except for one

participant who was over 40. The participants' background information is essential for comprehending their experiences, behaviors, and perspectives.

Table 2: Participants Information

	Gender	Language	Migration Background	Country/Region of Migration	Have Manchu Surname
Wendy	Female	Cantonese, Mandarin, English	First generation immigrant	Canada	Yes
Gigi	Female	Mandarin, English	First generation immigrant	Canada	Yes
Tony	Male	Cantonese, Mandarin, English	Third generation immigrant	Hong Kong (China)	No
Higuchi	Male	Manchu, Chinese Mandarin, Japanese, Mongolian (Cyrillic)	First generation immigrant	Japan	Yes
S.H.	Male	Mandarin, English, Korean, Japanese, Manchu	1.5 generation immigrant (Third Culture Kid)	Canada (Childhood in Germany)	Yes
Frank	Male	Mandarin, German, English, Manchu	First Generation Immigrant	Germany	Yes
Cathy	Female	Mandarin, Manchu,	First Generation Immigrant	Canada (Childhood	Yes

		English, French		in the US)	
Cathrine	Female	Mongolian (Uighur), Manchu, Mandarin, English, Spanish	First Generation Immigrant	US	Yes
Lina	Female	Sibe, Manchu, Mandarin English	First Generation Immigrant	US	Yes
Helena	Female	German, French, English, Mandarin, Manchu	Second Generation Immigrant, (Third Culture Kid)	Germany, (Childhood in France)	Yes

S.H. and Helena explicitly identified themselves as third-culture kids. S.H. resided in Germany and China during his youth, subsequently relocated to Canada with his family, and ultimately returned to Germany and China. S.H. identifies as a 1.5-generation immigrant. S.H.'s grandmother was Manchu, and he had some childhood exposure to the Manchu language. Helena identifies as a second-generation immigrant. She resided in France and China during her childhood, thereafter relocating to Germany with her family.

Tony is a third-generation immigrant from Hong Kong, an overseas Chinese region. He does not know his Manchu surname, but his family is the inheritor of the Manchu language. His mother learned Manchu from his great-grandmother. Tony's friend Higuchi currently works in Japan. Higuchi's grandfather spoke Manchu, and he learned some Manchu from his grandfather when he was a child.

Lina is a descendant of the Sibe and Manchu ethnicities. She is the only person in this study whose family speaks Manchu frequently. Most of her family members are native speakers of Sibe. She has native-level fluency in speaking Sibe and is currently working in a Manchu-related sideline. Cathrine is a descendant of the Mongolian and Manchu ethnicities. Her native languages are Mongolian and Mandarin. Her mother is of Manchu descent but is unable to converse in the Manchu

language.

Cathy resided in the United States for four years during her childhood before returning to China with her family. She emigrated to Canada in adulthood. Frank immigrated to Germany. His job is related to translation. Wendy and Gigi are two participants who cannot use Manchu, but have a certain understanding of Manchu culture and have Manchu family history and surnames. They are all first-generation immigrants living in Canada.

3.2 Data Analysis

This section introduces the data analysis methods and processes of this study. This section first introduces the theoretical framework of data analysis. Then it introduces the data organization, coding and theme induction process.

3.2.1 Framework and Theory

Li (2022) enriched the current research on the identity of heritage language (HL) learners by examining the construction, negotiation and performance of identity in the narratives of Chinese HL (CHL) learners at the University of Hong Kong. She reviewed a large number of studies on the identity of language learners. Li (2022: 15) argues that scholars have developed various methods to study identity by studying the relationship between being- for- the- self and identity- for- the- other. She believed the theorization of identity has been fragmented and cannot explain the multiple complexities of identity. Therefore, Li (2022: 29) proposed an integrated framework for understanding CHL learner identity (see figure 1).

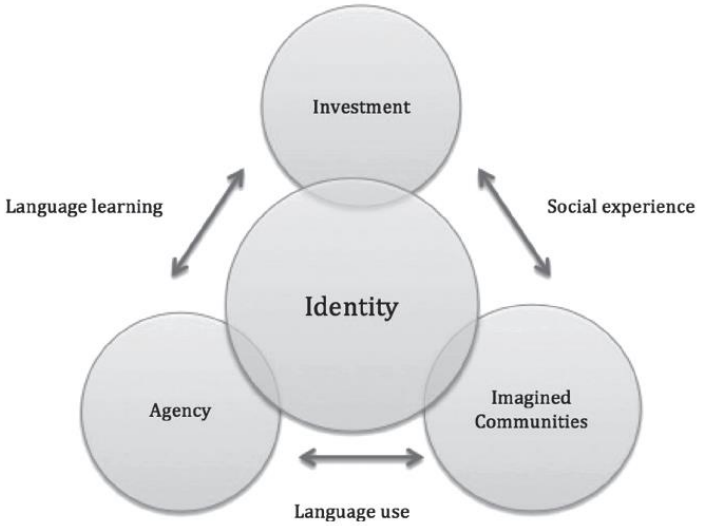


Figure 1. An integrated framework for understanding CHL learner identity by Li (2022: 29).

Li's comprehensive framework incorporates and expands upon the principal concepts of the interactive sociolinguistics paradigm, the social psychology paradigm, and the poststructuralist perspective. These three paradigms are not directly presented as independent modules in Li's framework, but reflect their theoretical core and practical application through the three core dimensions: investment, agency, and imagined communities. The three theories are particularly relevant to the relationship between CHL development and learner identity (Li 2022: 28).

Investment and agency are both significant concepts within poststructuralism (Li 2022: 19-20). Norton Peirce (1995) proposed the concept of investment to explain how language learners decide whether to invest in language learning within the framework of social capital, cultural capital and identity. The concept of language investment more effectively and accurately indicates the social and historical relationship between learners and the target language than the concept of learning motivation (Norton Peirce 1995: 17). Investment in the target language is also an investment in the learner's own social identity (Norton Peirce 1995: 18). Numerous research has elucidated the correlation between investment and identity. Darvin and Norton (2015: 37) emphasize that identity is multiple and a site of struggle. The manner in which learners engage with the target language is contingent upon the dynamic negotiation of power across several domains. A proactive language learner may decline to engage due to racism, misogyny, or homophobia present in the classroom (Darvin and Norton 2015: 37). Norton (2000) recounted the narrative of Felicia, a recent immigrant from Peru to Canada. She dropped the language course due to her ESL instructor's disregard for her Peruvian immigrant identity (Norton 2000: 141-142). Learners' investment is deeply influenced by the external environment. The theory of investment and identity helps this study analyze how positive

and negative language environments affect the investment of Manchu descendants in Manchu. Darvin and Norton (2015: 51) demonstrate that learners possess agency and can engage in learning, which facilitates the acquisition of material and symbolic resources, while also empowering them to scrutinize, interrogate, and oppose the prevailing practices and ideologies that have become entrenched in various domains.

The concept of agency has been elaborated by several researchers across diverse academic disciplines. Giddens (1984: 9) argues that structuralism notably neglects the characteristics of human subjects. Giddens (1984) proposed the Structuration Theory. He believes that individual agency and social structure interact with one another. Individuals are not entirely constrained by the structure, but can affect the structure by their actions. This indicates that agency empowers individuals to exert influence within social structures. The concept of agency is extensively discussed in both sociology and linguistics. Butler (1997: 7) stated that individuals perceive language primarily as an agency, a consequential behavior, an extended action, and an effective performance. Language embodies "thought" and represents agency, whereas thought manifests as agency through language. Consequently, the agency of language encompasses not merely the subject of expression, but also the act of expressing itself (Butler 1997: 7). Norton's (2000) study demonstrated the impact of identity agency on the individual's position. The individual possesses human agency, rendering their position within a specific discourse contestable (Norton 2000: 127). This indicates that agency influences the interpretation of an individual's discourse, and various listeners may attribute differing perspectives to it. Norton (2000) combines language investment and agency. Norton (2000: 146) asserts that Canadian immigrant women recognize the necessity of practicing the target language; however, they also come to realize that their immigrant status precludes them from integrating into the social network of native English speakers. Immigrants acquire English proficiency not only for communication but also to elevate their social standing. This indicates that the commitment of language learners is contingent upon their identity and social capital. The idea of agency enables me to assess whether Manchu learners perceive the acquisition of the Manchu language as an investment in their identity, while also illuminating the diverse agency identities of abroad Manchu descendants.

The concept of imagined communities was initially proposed by Benedict Anderson in 1983. Anderson (1983) claims that nations are not founded on direct interpersonal connections, but are instead imagined communities constructed through media, culture, language, and other factors. The notion of nation is now deeply embedded in nearly all written languages, and nationality is intrinsically linked to political awareness (Anderson 1983: 135). The notion of a nation is an imagined community that is constructed and conceived. Anderson (1983) identifies essential elements in the

formation of an imagined community, including print capitalism, mass media, a shared language, temporal and historical narratives, religion, territorial and administrative borders, capitalism, and anti-colonial nationalism. Norton (2001: 164-165) used the concept of imagined communities to explain the story of Felicia. Felicia perceives her community as Peru and its inhabitants, hence the marginalization of Peru by ESL educators carries further implications (Norton 2001: 165). Different learners have different imagined communities, and these imagined communities are best understood in the context of learners' unique commitment to the target language and the conditions under which they speak and practice the target language (Norton 2001: 165). Therefore, I can draw on imagined community theory to explore whether overseas Manchu descendants see themselves as inheritors of Manchu culture. Is their motivation for language acquisition influenced by the "imagined Manchu community"? Do Manchu online communities provide a sense of belonging among learners within the Manchu community? Do Manchu online communities provide a sense of belonging among learners within the Manchu community? This study addresses the unanswered questions in the realm of Manchu immigrant research.

Li integrated theories of investment, agency, and imagined communities through language learning, usage, and social experience to establish a cohesive framework for elucidating CHL identity. Li's (2022) comprehensive framework applies not just to CHL learners but also to the study of identity among overseas Manchu descendants. The framework offers a multi-dimensional analytical instrument that can capture the complexity of language acquisition and utilization, elucidating the interplay of identity, culture, and language. Whether it is CHL learners or overseas Manchu descendants, language learning is a practice of identity construction. This framework is appropriate for this study since it can effectively analyze the linguistic patterns of Manchu descendants. Nevertheless, current research predominantly focuses on the Chinese or other lingua franca's context and has not yet explored the applicability of endangered languages such as Manchu. This study seeks to utilize this framework and broaden its application to elucidate the mechanisms of inheritance and revival of Manchu culture among foreign Manchu communities.

3.2.2 Data Analysis Process

I used thematic analysis as the analytical approach for this study. Thematic analysis is a prevalent method for analyzing interviews. The conceptual framework for the thematic analysis of my interviews is grounded in the work of Braun and Clarke (2006). The themes capture important information about the data related to the research question and represent a certain degree of patterned response or meaning within the data set (Braun and Clarke 2006: 82). This indicates that throughout

data analysis, researchers seek key information that can assist in addressing their inquiries. This key information is recurring, and thematic analysis is a summary of this recurring content. Thematic analysis is flexible and allows for a wide range of analytical options, which means that a wide range of descriptions of the data can be made (Braun and Clarke 2006: 97). The content and events mentioned by participants in the interviews are not only about their personal experiences but also reflect the social context. This study encompasses a wide array of themes, making the adaptability of thematic analysis appropriate for this study.

The data analysis procedure is segmented into the subsequent stages: Initially, I transcribed the audio data. The audio data includes Chinese and Manchu languages. The Chinese data was initially transcribed by AI, after which I identified and rectified it. The existing AI transcription technology is increasingly advancing in sophistication. Prolonged, repetitive transcribing will lead to fatigue, adversely impacting transcription quality (Matheson 2007: 557). While AI transcription technology enhances the efficiency of transcription for researchers, the existing transcription languages are restricted, primarily to English, Chinese, and other languages with substantial native-speaker populations. AI cannot transcribe Manchu, and the transcription of Manchu data was executed by me. I repeatedly listened to and acknowledged all the evidence. Through the repeated listening of interviews, researchers can more effectively record information, including those that might otherwise be neglected (Point and Baruch 2023: 4). Subsequently, I encoded the data. I employed English to encode the transcriptions of Chinese and Manchu texts. Researchers document reflections and concepts about segments of the data to derive abstractions and enhance the study (Petty, Thomson, and Stew 2012: 4). My thematic analysis integrated the extensive framework suggested by Li and classified the data into language learning, language use, and social experience at the macro level. I subsequently categorized the data into several sub-themes within these three overarching topics. The themes encompassed participants' linguistic involvement, identity agency, and the globally conceived Manchu community. The languages utilized in the interview were Mandarin and Manchu. I translated the chosen data into Mandarin-English and Manchu-English.

Reliability in qualitative research concerns consistency and dependability in data collection, analysis, and interpretation (McLeod 2024). Qualitative researchers recognize that their personal experiences and subjectivity influence their interpretations, which they disclose to readers through a reflective process (Petty, Thomson, and Stew 2012: 4). I invited two participants to review some analysis results. Furthermore, I extensively searched and reviewed several sources pertinent to the data to ensure accurate comprehension, including local language policies, news articles, interviews, recruitment platforms, employment websites, and educational resources. I repeatedly checked

whether the data was consistent with the theme during the data analysis process.

4. Manchu Language Learning: Strategies, Motivations and the Role of Identity

Based on Li's comprehensive framework, this chapter examines the relationship between language learning and identity, focusing on the role of investment and agency in the process of learning Manchu. The study found that identity is an important driving force for many Manchu learners to overcome difficulties. Unlike Norton (2001:166), who pointed out that "second language learners often gain access to material resources", people who learn Manchu do not gain economic and material returns. They are more motivated by a sense of identity with their own cultural identity and a sense of responsibility for the protection of language and tradition. However, language is not equally important to all descendants of the Manchu people. Although some people are proud of their ethnic background, they still give up the process of learning Manchu due to practical considerations. This shows that language ability and ethnic identity are not always synchronized. Not being able to speak Manchu does not necessarily mean losing the identity of being a Manchu.

The lack of learning resources directly impacts the choice of learning methods. With limited language learning methods, some learners slowly explore learning methods that fit them. Online courses and online learning groups have helped them relieve the problems in the learning process to a certain extent. The current level of overseas Manchu language education needs to be improved. The incorrect teaching methods of Manchu language courses have led to a huge difference between the "spelling Manchu" that students learn and the practical Manchu. In addition, the lack of Chinese teaching resources has made the language revival face great resistance. These difficulties are not only problems of Manchu language education but also reflect the complexity and difficulty of endangered language protection.

This chapter is divided into four parts. Section 4.1 examines the Manchu language learning methods and strategies adopted by overseas Manchu descendants. Section 4.2 discusses the main challenges, including the lack of resources and the Manchu language environment. Section 4.3 analyzes the interaction between language learning and motivation, emphasizing the role of identity. Section 4.4 explores the obstacles to Manchu language revival in education and the shortcomings of current overseas Manchu language teaching.

4.1 Language Learning Methods and Strategies

Of the ten participants, only Wendy and Gigi were unable to use Manchu, while Lina benefited from a Manchu-speaking family. The remaining seven participants learned Manchu despite many obstacles, including the lack of a Manchu-speaking environment, inadequate language resources, and insufficient community support. They utilized limited resources to pursue varied investment options. Tony used the period he was compelled to remain at home owing to Covid-19 to commence his study of Manchu. He enrolled in the online Colloquial Sibe course instructed by the two Sibe professors at Charles University previously referenced. Many participants also took the course. Tony improved his Manchu language skills to an advanced level in 4 years through extensive self-study in his spare time. He honed his speaking skills through online oral courses and refined his writing in Manchu by independently studying numerous Manchu and Sibe texts. Tony explained the reason for choosing Manchu online courses in example 1:

Example 1

"You also know that this (Manchu) language is already no language environment in Mainland China. If we want to find a student, we can't say Hong Kong. Even in Beijing, there are only a few dozen people." (Tony: pos 3)

The reality that Manchu lacks a language environment worldwide makes it impossible for overseas Manchu descendants to find offline courses locally, and Manchu online courses have become one of the most suitable learning methods for them. The Manchu Study Group website offers other Manchu courses, which is also the choice of many participants. Cathrine talked about another benefit of online Manchu courses in example 2:

Example 2

"I signed up for the summer class at the Manchu Study Group. They have it every year, and their teachers are really serious. The courses are free, which I think is good. Most Manchu online courses are free, except for those small private classes that may charge a fee." (Cathrine: pos 1)

Although there is a lack of offline Manchu language courses in many areas, many universities offer Manchu language studies courses. Students studying Chinese studies or East Asian studies in university can learn Manchu through university courses. Helena and S.H. have both participated in Manchu language courses offered by their departments.

Another learning option available to these Manchu learners is online one-on-one lessons. Higuchi described his experience of learning Manchu. Although Higuchi had a supportive family language environment during his childhood, he did not systematically learn Manchu until he grew up. He chose to study Manchu with Mr. Meng Ronglu, the director of the Xinjiang Sibe Manchu Cultural Center. He opted for a one-on-one course. Many participants also chose this learning method. They choose a Manchu instructor or a native Manchu speaker for online individualized instruction. This approach is more effective and targeted than online multi-person courses. Students may ask questions to the instructor at any point during the course. He shared his course experience in example 3:

Example 3

"In a private conversation, he (Mr. Meng) provided me with some notes [...] He read it, and I followed. He also interviewed a variety of native speakers. Maybe from Heilongjiang or Xinjiang, and he handed me some of his interviews[...] If I didn't understand something, I can ask him, and if I understood it, I would jot it down myself[...] Later, he would let me duplicate the interview and then tell me whether what I said matched what he said during the interview. Then we moved to the next video." (Higuchi: pos 4)

Similarly, S.H. also chose the one-on-one method to learn Manchu. He believed that choosing a native Manchu speaker for one-on-one learning is more effective. He shared in example 4:

Example 4

"I had the opportunity to study with a senior who lived in Latvia[...] He would teach me using the logic of a native speaker[...] I would naturally absorb some of the influence of his native language logic[...] Then I would use my spare time to really study with him." (S.H: pos 8)

The other participants' experiences in learning Manchu were quite similar. Although they attended online courses, one-on-one courses, or university courses, their investment in Manchu learning was largely based on their self-study time. Due to insufficient resources and community support for Manchu education, participants had to rely on self-study. Several participants indicated that the time commitment required for learning Manchu is substantial, and they believed that the duration needed to acquire proficiency in Manchu exceeds that of languages such as Mandarin and English. Certain Manchu websites, such as Manjusa, can offer assistance. Nevertheless, the amount

of Manchu knowledge available on these websites is insufficient to answer all their questions. They still need to read a lot of ancient Manchu books to learn the usage of written Manchu. Reading ancient texts requires much more time than using contemporary textbooks. Participants who majored in Manchu also spent a lot of time on self-study. Although the time investment has increased a lot, the financial investment has not increased significantly. Some participants believed that learning Manchu is much cheaper than learning English, German, Spanish and other languages. Alongside some free Manchu courses, the costs of other Manchu courses are also acceptable to participants. Most of their self-study resources came from several well-known Manchu websites and internal sharing in online Manchu groups. Most of the Manchu resources they use are free, and many Manchu learners share resources.

4.2 Identity and Language Learning Challenges

As mentioned above, Manchu learners face many challenges. According to Liu et al. (2022: 01), languages are classified as low resources when they lack the quantity of data necessary for training statistical and machine learning tools and models. The reasons for scarce resources vary but may include a lack of technological means to develop them, a relatively small number of users, or a lack of urgency to collect such resources among bilingual populations with rich second language resources (Liu et al. 2022: 01). The lack of Manchu resources makes language learning more difficult. The agency of Manchu learners plays a crucial role in overcoming these challenges by actively seeking help from other Manchu speakers.

S.H. discussed the difficulties he encountered while learning Manchu. Individual Manchu words are relatively easy to comprehend, whereas Manchu phrases present the greatest challenge. He provided several instances of such phrases. He believed that to understand the true meaning of these words, learners not only need to understand the transliteration or literal translation of the phrase but also need to understand the historical background related to the word. S.H explained in example 5:

Example 5

“Then when I was in university […] I had such difficulty learning Manchu, such as the word "classroom"[…] If it is in Manchu, it is “Kiceniboo ᡴᡳᠴᡝᠨᡳ ᠪᡠ”. “Kicen ᡴᡳᠴᡝᠨ” means course, and “I ᡳ” is the genitive, and “boo ᠪᡠ” means house or home. I had to think about how to deal with this transliteration, and how to deal with the meaning, so it was quite difficult at that time[…] Some phrase, such as " Imperial Household Department ", In Manchu is"dorgi yamun ᡩᠣᡵᡤᡳ ᠶᠠᠮᡠᠨ". "Dorgi

[illegible]" means inside, and "yamun [illegible]" means bureau. How do I know what this combination of two words means Imperial Household Department? Another phrase "meiren i janggin [illegible]", "meiren [illegible]" means shoulder, "janggin [illegible]" means general, but how do I know that these two words together mean "Vice Commander "? [...] When I translate, I have to pay attention to its cultural background, that is, its historical background."(S.H: pos 7&11&12)

Acquiring knowledge of Manchu history facilitates an understanding of the combination and application of words and phrases. The problems encountered by the participants include the difficulty and complexity of learning Manchu. Many participants revealed that they did not encounter a particularly practical or systematic learning method for learning Manchu like other languages. They each depended on their own exploration to find a learning method that suited them. Some participants believed that Manchu shows irregularity and can only be memorized by rote.

Another challenge in learning Manchu is the lack of digital resources. Modern language learning often relies on online dictionaries, translation software, voice assistants and other technological means. In the absence of these instruments, learners must depend solely on printed books or spoken communication, which makes it more difficult to obtain information. Lina served as a manager and online private instructor for Sibe and Manchu learning groups. She recounted her experience in teaching Manchu in example 6:

Example 6

"Some of the Manchu online resources we have now include ANAKV, Manchu work or some Japanese Manchu dictionaries. These dictionaries can be searched on the Internet. But in fact, the entries included in these dictionaries are far from enough. Moreover, there is no translation software for Manchu, while other languages such as English can be translated using platforms such as Google or GPT. In most cases, a teacher or a native speaker of the Sibe or Manchu ethnic group is still needed to guide the students, which to a certain extent increases the difficulty of learning. So I ask my students to write their own vocabulary books to record every word, phrase and sentence they have learned." (Lina: pos 4)

Helena often asks questions to other Manchu speakers online. She actively communicates with other Manchu speakers to solve the problems she encounters in Manchu learning. Helena shared how she dealt with the difficulties she encountered in her studies in example 7:

Example 7

"For other languages, you can use Google Translate. Although the translation is often not very accurate, you can understand the general meaning. The translations of Manchu that can be used on the Internet are all online dictionaries, which cannot translate a sentence for you. You really need to ask others, ask people who have learned well on the Internet. I think most people rely on learning from each other and asking each other to understand."(Helena: pos 7)

Many participants shared situations similar to Helena's. They described their experiences of seeking help from others in their studies. Due to the scarcity of Manchu teachers and native speakers, there were not many people who could help them learn Manchu, which resulted in a relatively isolated situation in their language learning. Participants did not give up because of the scarcity of learning resources and the isolation of the learning environment. They proactively sought assistance from other Manchu speakers or educators to solve the problems they encountered in self-study. They joined multiple Manchu learning groups. Some participants would show their Manchu practice on social media platforms such as REDnote and Instagram. Other Manchu speakers would help them correct vocabulary or grammatical problems in the comments. Many participants portrayed themselves as Manchu learners who diligently surmount challenges.

4.3 Identity as Motivation in Language Learning

Motivation for second language learning has been extensively studied. Learners who invest in a second language will gain access to a wider range of symbols and resources (Norton Peirce 1995: 17). The increase in learners' investment in language learning is manifested in their awareness of the symbolic benefits of improving their language proficiency (Li 2022: 131). Helena's investment in her Manchu language stems from her career plan and her sense of achievement. She felt proud every time she showed her Manchu to others. Her proficiency in Manchu enhances her confidence amidst a diverse group of multilingual people. She believed that the speakers of endangered languages are rare, which further enhances her uniqueness. She enjoyed showing her Manchu calligraphy, Manchu literature, and copybooks to her acquaintances. She also adorned herself with jewelry inscribed with Manchu characters. She highlighted her identification background when introducing herself. Her Manchu background gave her enough motivation to learn Manchu. She maintained that Manchu is the most effective way to prove her identity. Helena shared in example 8:

Example 8

"You can speak Manchu! This sentence is my greatest achievement, more exciting than German, French, and Mandarin. This is my pride. There are too many people who can speak multiple languages now, but being able to speak this endangered language is really cool for many people. I like to show my fluency in Manchu. I like people's surprised expressions." (Helena: pos 11)

Another motivation for language learning is identity recognition, which is even stronger for inheritors of endangered languages. Eight participants expressed that their motivation and investment in Manchu language learning stemmed from their identification with their identity. Helena's motive for learning Manchu was primarily to protect the Manchu language, rather than merely to seek her friends' admiration. Helena was a third-culture kid. Her cultural background was closer to France and Germany. As she said in example 9:

Example 9

"Actually, you should understand me. We are either second-generation immigrants or third-culture kids. We lack comprehension of our origins; we cannot perceive it. The sole method is to learn the language. This constitutes our final connection. Due to my geographical separation from Manchuria, I am unable to transmit my cultural legacy in the same manner as others; therefore, I will safeguard the language. I am prepared to invest time in mastering it. I am aware of the unique circumstances surrounding the Manchu language, which is on the verge of extinction. This is what I can do for it." (Helena: pos 10)

Cathy emphasized the role of Manchu language learning in Manchu identity. She held the view that as a Manchu, she has the obligation to learn Manchu and pass it on. As she said in example 10:

Example 10

"I feel that I am a Manchu, and if I don't even know my own language, I think it's wrong. To be honest, there are quite a lot of foreigners who can speak Manchu, and it seems that there are fewer Manchus who can speak Manchu than foreigners. […] Many Manchus don't have a high sense of identity. Then I feel that I am very proud to be a Manchu, so I should learn Manchu, and then in the

future, I can help our ethnic group pass on our culture and language. I think we should encourage more current Manchus to identify themselves. Including our future descendants, because this language is really endangered, and many Chinese people think that Manchu is extinct. But in fact, if we can pick it up, it is also a responsibility for ourselves. For example, Manchu has a living space overseas now, so we should offer more courses. For example, Manchu classes for kindergarten and elementary schools, so that children can also learn Manchu." (Cathy: pos 5&6)

Lina gave the same reason. Although online Manchu teaching is not a very lucrative job for her, she still sticks to this job for the inheritance and protection of the language. Lina served as the volunteer manager for the Manchu learning group. She aspired that her endeavors would enable more Manchu and Sibe people to inherit their language and culture. Before managing the learning group, she found that the absence of a language environment had led to a regression in her language skills. She can practice the language with other Sibe and Manchu speakers. As she said in example 11:

Example 11

"This is not a particularly profitable job, so I have other occupations. But as a Sibe, I believe that if I don't take the initiative to defend our language and culture, who will? I have better career options. But I've been sticking with our group, doing things like managing it, posting learning and morning reading duties, etc. This is my obligation. I feel a little rusty when I speak now. Everyone speaks Mandarin, and whenever I go home, I rarely see anyone who speaks Sibe. So I'm learning, and it's beneficial for me to practice these skills on a daily basis." (Lina: pos 3)

Identity became the motivation for language learning, and the agency of identity drove investment in language learning. Manchu learning could not bring economic benefits to these learners. Some participants pointed out that Manchu lacked cultural appeal in comparison to other language learning. They argued that the lack of Manchu language television dramas and films would render Manchu language learning tedious. The participants' motivation for learning was unadulterated. They identified themselves as steadfast inheritors of the Manchu lineage. They believed that language was the core and most important part of a nation's culture. Consequently, they were willing to invest a lot of time and energy in learning Manchu.

There were two other participants in this study, Wendy and Gigi, who did not speak Manchu at all but were very proud of their Manchu identity. Wendy and Gigi showed their affirmation of Manchu culture and identity; yet both indicated a deficiency in motivation and resources to acquire

knowledge of the Manchu language. Wendy considered Manchu to be less practical for her in Canada compared to English and French. She expressed a preference for investing in and learning French. The abundant French resources in Canada were more appealing to her. As Wendy said in example 12:

Example 12

"I am interested to know more about Manchu, but I think it still requires a big commitment for me to learn it. I am not ready to pick it up yet. Canada is a bilingual country of English and French. I think the use of French will open up more opportunities. And now as a person who only knows English, I may be interested in learning French[...] I lack the motivation to learn Manchu[...] and also because it is not widely used." (Wendy: pos 2&3)

Gigi also gave a similar reason, as she said in example 13:

Example 13

"Learning Manchu is not a high priority. I am a newcomer. Now let me learn a language I have never been exposed to before, I would probably want to improve my English or learn French […] I think there is no language environment for Manchu. In fact, this is just like the French in Canada. It needs government support and a language environment." (Gigi: pos 8)

The preservation and promotion of an endangered language are intrinsically linked to governmental assistance and the language environment. Government support, community engagement, a conducive linguistic environment, and ample French resources will facilitate accelerated and profound learning for French learners. Despite the Canadian government's open and friendly language policy, resources for Manchu in Canada are exceedingly few. The scarcity of Manchu resources has impeded their investment. Wendy and Gigi chose not to invest in and study the Manchu language due to the lack of economic incentives and environmental support.

Wendy and Gigi asserted that failing to learn Manchu would not undermine their Manchu identity. The other Manchu speakers in this study believed that Manchu is highly tied to identity, and they regard language as a symbol of national identity. For the Manchu people unable to utilize the Manchu language, linguistic proficiency was not a requisite for identity; national identity is founded on alternative factors like as culture, history, and customs.

4.4 Challenges of Manchu Language Revival in Language Education

In the previous paragraph, I mentioned the various ways of Manchu revival that are currently emerging around the world. Although Manchu revival activities have gradually been underway, the road to revival is still full of challenges. The Manchu taught in many Manchu classes was very different from practical Manchu. These courses used the method of “spelling Manchu” to teach students Manchu. This teaching method results in a huge difference in pronunciation between the Manchu spelled out by students and the Manchu used in life. Higuchi has been exposed to many Manchu accents and is confident that the “spelling Manchu” cannot be communicated with real Manchu speakers. He maintained that the revival of Manchu should not be carried out in this form, which would make the revival and inheritance of the Manchu language more difficult. He pointed out in example 14:

Example 14

“Actually, I know some Manchu language classes, but they're all about teaching the phonics of the Manchu language, not a specific Manchu language that is still living today. I believe the pronunciation is absolutely different. What I learned is either the spoken language of Xinjiang Sibe, or the spoken Manchu language of Heilongjiang when chatting with Heilongjiang elders. No matter which one, it is completely different from the phonics of the Manchu language[...] In fact, it is still difficult to pass on this language, because they used the wrong teaching method. They are teaching spelling Manchu, not teaching the Manchu language. […] In fact, Manchu is a language that is read and written just like English, sometimes it is completely inconsistent, that is, for example, the English word "knight", its first letter is K, but in fact, K is not pronounced. If you put the word "knight" into Manchu, some people who teach Manchu will clearly pronounce the letter K, but this letter K is not pronounced. Teaching the language in this way is actually misleading. ” (Higuchi: pos 9 &14)

Another challenge of Manchu language education was that a large number of Manchu language textbooks and books were not written in Chinese. Since many experts studying the Manchu language are foreigners, these Manchu language textbooks are written in multiple languages. This brings certain difficulties to the self-study of overseas Manchu descendants whose mother tongue is Mandarin. Indirect learning costs require learners to have the ability of another foreign language. Using a non-native language to learn another language will also cause deviations in conceptual understanding. Many of Cathrine’s Manchu language learning resources are translated into Chinese or English by other language users and sent to her. She argues that this phenomenon has greatly

increased the difficulty of her Manchu language learning. She highlighted in example 15:

Example 15

"The biggest problem with Manchu right now is that there are not enough Chinese books on things like grammar and semantics that you want to learn. Many of the current Manchu experts are not Manchus, not Chinese. There are many useful Manchu books in German and Russian, but not in Chinese. Many Chinese people don't want to learn it." (Cathrine: pos 3)

Lina identified a similar issue in her teaching experience, observing that many foreign language textbooks are excessively academic and theoretical, rendering them unsuitable for novices who are just learning the language. She stated in example 16:

Example 16

"Many foreign language Manchu materials, such as Japanese and Russian, are not actually compiled in recent years. These books are quite old. And they are not suitable for students who are just learning Manchu. Very academic books, too difficult for beginners. I have read some translated books given by friends, even if they are translated into Chinese, these books are too academic." (Lina: pos 7)

This chapter examines the relationship between Manchu language learning and identity through Li's integrative framework and the concepts of investment and agency. The findings suggest that for many Manchu descendants, language learning is driven by identity and emotional connection to the culture rather than material gain. Some learners demonstrate strong agency. They actively seek alternative learning methods, such as online resources and online communities. Others, however, give up learning Manchu due to multiple factors, including a lack of language environment and limited consideration of learning other languages. It is worth noting that not being able to speak Manchu does not equate to a loss of Manchu identity, as some descendants are still proud of their heritage despite not mastering Manchu. However, the revival of Manchu in education faces obstacles, like limited Manchu-Chinese training materials and wrong ways of teaching "spelling Manchu". The following chapter examines the effects of Manchu language use on identity. Additionally, it explores the complicated relationship between language and self-perception among overseas Manchu descendants.

5. Manchu Language Use: Identity Construction and Cultural Maintenance

This chapter explores how overseas Manchu descendants establish connections with the global Manchu community through the use of Manchu, thus getting a sense of belonging in cultural identity. This manifestation of agency not only demonstrates learners' commitment to the revival of Manchu culture but also reflects the influence of different social and cultural backgrounds on agency (Li, 2022: 21). This chapter adopts Li's framework to analyze how language use symbolizes agency. The Manchu imagined community has played a driving role in promoting the formation of a global Manchu online community. The use of Manchu is not merely a manifestation of language ability, but also a dynamic process of identity construction and cultural revival by individuals and groups through agency and imagined communities. Overseas Manchu descendants have created a virtual language environment, and they actively and extensively establish connections with Manchu people and Manchu language users around the world.

This chapter is divided into four parts. Section 5.1 is about agency and imagined communities that enable overseas Manchu descendants to establish connections around the world and form a cultural community that transcends geographical limitations. Section 5.2 reveals the core role of Manchu in the construction of the identity of overseas Manchu descendants. Research shows that Manchu is not only a communication tool but also a symbol of cultural identity. Section 5.3 discusses how overseas Manchu descendants reconstructed their cultural identity after learning the Manchu language, and found a sense of cultural belonging in a globalized and multicultural environment, while achieving cross-cultural adaptation and balance. Section 5.4 summarizes the main obstacles to the revival of the Manchu language in terms of language use. In mainland China, the Mandarin policy restricts the spread of the Manchu language, while overseas Manchu groups lack physical community support.

5.1 Connecting Language Users Across Borders

The dissemination of the Manchu language and the revival of Manchu culture offer new opportunities for the construction of imagined communities. For overseas Manchu descendants, learning and using the Manchu language has become an important way for them to connect with Manchu people around the world and pass on cultural memories. In cross-cultural exchanges, the Manchu language facilitates the reconstruction of national identity and fosters the development of a Manchu-imagined community that transcends geographical limitations. This result also means that

Manchu online communication has promoted the revival of the Manchu language. In the process of learning Manchu, Cathy made many friends with Manchu descendants from all over the world. She believed that the advancement of the online Manchu community is highly efficacious. Cathy believed that cross-national and cross-cultural connection is unique to the Manchus and is one of the most amazing features of the overseas Manchu community. As she said in example 17:

Example 17

"I think this may be the most amazing thing about overseas Manchus. Generally, for example, my friend's friends are all from Toronto or Canada. That is to say, where you live, your friends are also from that place. But my friends include British Chinese, Germans, Americans, and Peruvian Chinese. Many people are curious about how you made these friends. I would tell them that I met them while learning Manchu[...] because our language is too small. If you see someone posting Manchu-related content on Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, etc., you will definitely follow them and add them as friends. Everyone knows each other in this way. Other ethnic groups are not like us. Take the Uyghurs for example. The Uyghurs have their own community in Toronto, and they communicate with local Uyghurs in Toronto." (Cathy: pos 8)

Similarly, Tony also made new Manchu friends on the Internet. Some of his friends were met through his Instagram accounts on the Manchu language and Manchu culture. Tony managed two Instagram accounts, through which he promoted the Manchu language and Manchu culture. He and his Manchu friends on the Internet encourage each other. I also got to know Tony two years ago by following his Instagram and inviting him to participate in this interview. Tony and his friend developed an online Sibe-Manchu dictionary. He was the editor of this dictionary. He also often digitized some Manchu and Sibe books by scanning and other means, and then sent these materials to Manchu learners who needed them. He has been persisting in the online revival and promotion of the Manchu language, and he has made a lot of effort in this endeavor. Tony was one of the organizers or leaders of the overseas online Manchu revival. As he said in example 18:

Example 18

"I have done a lot of work (to help revive the Manchu language), so now it has become a part of my life." (Tony: pos 8)

Online language communication has become a way for learners to practice Manchu. This virtual language environment helps them practice their spoken and daily language skills. Higuchi actively sought native Manchu speakers globally for communication. As a result, he has acquired the ability to recognize multiple Manchu dialects and accents. He explained in example 19:

Example 19

"I actually not only contacted Sibe people offline, I also contacted Manchu people in Heilongjiang online. For example, the Manchu elders from the most famous (a Manchu village, Ilan Boo) Sanjiazi. They have a chat group, and I chat with them there. On the other hand, I know some other Sibe people online, young people on the Internet, and I also chat with them." (Higuchi: pos 5)

Other participants also said that they sometimes made more Manchu friends through Manchu promotional articles on Instagram and REDnote app. Manchu, as a cultural bond, connects Manchu descendants from all over the world. The dissemination and utilization of Manchu constitute both a revival initiative and a construction of identity. The lack of a physical community abroad has reinforced the bond among Manchu individuals globally. In this process, the participants played the role of language revival promoters, promoting the revival of the Manchu language through spontaneous learning and organizing online communities.

5.2 Language: The Core of Manchu Culture

When discussing what aspects of the Manchus are most important, most of the answers I got were about language. This was consistent with the results I expected. This result showed that the overseas Manchus attach more importance to language. Especially for overseas Manchu descendants, when they talk to friends about the Manchus and Manchu culture, they find that the cultural characteristics of the Manchus do not seem to be obvious. Participants felt the marginalization of the Manchus in daily communication and cultural communication. Frank felt a deep sense of powerlessness. He argued that the serious marginalization of the Manchus would accelerate the demise of the Manchu language. He pointed out in example 20:

Example 20

"When talking to foreigners about the Manchus, it feels that many of them just see the Manchus as Chinese or Mongolians. The Manchus do not have language characteristics, like Tibetan or Uyghur.

Maybe when you talk to foreigners about Tibetans, they will immediately think of the Tibetan language. The Manchus do not have such characteristics. Many people even think that the Manchu language is just a dialect. It is the same when talking to Chinese people. They only know about The Legend of Zhen Huan and the Ula Nara hala." (Frank: pos 10)

Tony and Cathrine also pointed out the fact that the Manchus lack cultural characteristics. They believed that the Manchu language was the last cultural characteristic of the Manchus. As Tony said in example 21:

Example 21

"There are very few cultural elements passed down in modern society. In the Qing Dynasty, the Manchus had to ride and shoot, which was an important culture, but it has disappeared now. Another example is traditional clothing, such as the Ma Gua, I would wear during the Spring Festival. Now that there is more ethnic integration, some people start to say that your clothes are Hufu(nomadic dress) and your clothing is foreign dress […] Finally, because you are assimilated by the Han people, it seems that even your culture is no different from that of the Majority Han people. So the Manchu language is the most important […] It is the last straw we can grasp." (Tony: pos 19)

Higuchi thought that language was the most important characteristic of a nation. In the host country, language is the characteristic that distinguishes a minority from other minorities in the same country. Therefore, language is a key element in the reshaping of the core culture. As Higuchi said in example 22:

Example 22

"The biggest difference between other ethnic minorities and the Han Chinese in another country is that ethnic minorities can speak their own language fluently. They can think about many things in their mother tongue. I think this is the biggest difference. Being able to master and use your own language and pass it on is the biggest feature of an ethnic group." (Higuchi: pos 13)

Lina was a native speaker of Sibe and Manchu. She understood the current situation of Sibe and Manchu very well. When she made video calls to her family members living in mainland China, she actively communicated with them in Sibe and Manchu instead of Mandarin. She contended that currently, there are relatively few Sibe individuals capable of speaking Sibe. She believed that both

the Manchu and the Sibe have significantly diminished cultural features due to sinicization. She stated in example 23:

Example 23

"When people mention the Manchu, they may only think of costume dramas. When they mention the Sibe, they may only think of Tong Liya (a Sibe actress) or Xinjiang. Many mainlanders think that the Sibe are Uyghurs. This shows that our cultural symbols or cultural characteristics are far less obvious than those of the Uyghurs. This is not alarmist, but a fact. Moreover, more and more Sibe people can only speak Chinese (Mandarin)." (Lina: pos 9)

This result also showed that overseas Manchu descendants have demonstrated individual and collective initiative by learning and using the Manchu language. In the context of globalization, they have shaped a new Manchu "imagined community" through digital tools. Their emphasis on the Manchu language is not only a matter of language protection, but also a proactive construction of a nation's identity.

5.3 Language and Cross-Cultural Identity Adaptation

The participants in this study came from a wide range of cultural backgrounds. They were overseas immigrants with ethnic minority backgrounds. Studying frequent immigrants and immigrants with more diverse cross-cultural experiences helps expand the subcategories of immigrants in the diaspora context (Li 2022: 13). By examining the participants' cross-cultural identity adjustment, we can understand how they establish their identity across different cultures. Most of the participants did not have strong identity conflicts when living in the host country. The difference was S.H and Helena, who were third culture kids. S.H used to feel sad about being a third culture kid. He was confused about his identity at the time and thought he did not belong to any culture. He explained in example 24:

Example 24

"(The topic of identity) is a nightmare for all TCKs. So I used to add Canadian as an identity. But now I slowly feel that because I did not take the initiative to become a Canadian citizen, this identity has given me a lot of historical burdens, and some of my personal confusion about the Western world. The West is good, but it does not belong to me[...] So at the time at the International Education

Institute, I remember clearly that I cried for three hours, because this was the time I really found that I had no home, culturally I was homeless."(S.H: pos 3 & 5)

As S.H slowly explored and understood his identity, he now has a stronger affirmation of his identity. The study of the Manchu language and Manchu culture played a driving role in the process of identity construction. He found a balance of his identity in the host country. Although he has Canadian citizenship and has lived in Canada and Germany for many years, he finally realized that his identity should not be restricted by nationality. As he said:

Example 25

"Now when I introduce myself to others, "I was born in Chinese Manchuria," I would say that, but people ask me, "Where do you really come from?" Then I would mention that I'm Chinese on my father's side, and on my mother's side, I'm Manchurian and Korean. I would answer this way, I think this is why I would put my ethnicity before my country. Because this is where I really belong." (S.H: pos 3)

Similarly, after learning Manchu in the United States, Cathrine redefined her identity. As she said in example 26:

Example 26

"Although I am both Mongolian and Manchu, I felt more Mongolian when I was young. Because Mongolian is my mother tongue, Manchu is not my mother tongue[...] Now, I feel that the Mongolian and Manchu identities are equally important to me. I think this is because my Manchu language is getting better and better[...] People always say that Mongolians and Manchus are one family, and I like to chat with people who can speak these two languages. I feel close to them." (Cathrine: pos 6)

Frank indicated that he sometimes could not balance learning Manchu due to simultaneously learning multiple languages. He was a language worker who needed to prioritize his proficiency in German and English before practicing and consolidating his Manchu. He claimed that his Manchu frequently declined, but he would practice more to compensate for the decline. He had lived in Germany for many years, and his Manchu identity was not shaken by his increased fluency in German and English. The frequency and fluency of language use will increase a person's affirmation of his identity, and conversely, this affirmation will not be weakened by the decline in language proficiency.

This means that the negative impact of reduced language proficiency on identity is not significant. As Frank said in example 27:

Example 27

"I have never thought that I am German because I have been in Germany for many years. Even if my German is at the level of a native speaker, I am still a Manchu." (Frank: pos 4)

Wendy felt somewhat guilty about her inability to speak Manchu. She thought that she could not contribute to the Manchu people. She had used Cantonese and Mandarin since childhood, and she was firm in her identity as a Cantonese. She had lived in Canada for a long time, and she was using more and more English and Mandarin. The lack of a Cantonese environment and practice had caused her native Cantonese to become rusty. The decline in her native language ability and the fact that she could not speak Manchu did not affect her denial of her Cantonese and Manchu identities. She took pride in her Manchu heritage.

The majority of participants reported that increasing their Manchu language proficiency helped them feel more confident in their Manchu identity. Some attempted to verify their identities in several ways, including consulting specialists, engaging in group conversations with people with the same surname, and tracing their family history through DNA testing. Most of them were immigrants from other countries eager to learn about their ancient homeland. The process of finding their ancestors was made more difficult by the special history of the Manchus, which deepened their curiosity. Some people did not know who their ancestors were, but their proficiency in the Manchu language gave them more confidence and tenacity. Some participants said that learning Manchu made them feel more comfortable. Most participants identified themselves as Manchu immigrants or Manchus living in immigrant countries.

5.4 Challenges of Manchu Language Revival in Language Use

The lack of support from a physical community for the use and revival of Manchu overseas will limit the promotion of Manchu. The majority of Manchu promotional activities are conducted by individuals or small groups lacking financial and resource backing from overseas communities. The initiation of foreign Manchu language research and technology will also face restrictions. The role of a community is essential to the dissemination of a language. Taking the Chinese community as an example, the increase in the size of the Chinese community in a region will bring more language

users. Taking the Chinese community as an example, the increase in the size of the Chinese community in a region will bring more language users. Li (2022: 6) reports a substantial increase in the number of Mandarin-speaking individuals as their native language within overseas Chinese immigrant families. According to Statista (2023), Mandarin and Cantonese were spoken by about 3.5 million people in the United States in 2022, making them the third most prevalent languages spoken in homes, following English and Spanish. The Manchu population is not small worldwide, but due to the high degree of Sinicization of the Manchu, Manchu people living overseas have also been integrated into the Chinese Han community. Higuchi pointed out the role and importance of physical communities by taking other ethnic minority communities in Japan as examples. He shared in example 28:

Example 28

"In contrast, the Mongolians in Japan have their own shops. They set up a study abroad consulting or job consulting in the Mongolian language to help the students from Inner Mongolia […] The Mongolians have established their own community in Japan, similar to the small Chinese community." (Higuchi: pos 12)

Nearly all participants indicated that the primary impediment to the revival of Manchu is the lack of support from the Manchu community overseas. S.H also believed that the difficulty of the overseas revival of the Manchu language lies not in the lack of Manchu language researchers, but in the lack of physical communities. As S.H said in example 29:

Example 29

"We do not lack some particularly famous scholars or knowledgeable people, but we lack a real community with a large scale." (S.H: pos 13)

On the other hand, the challenge that Manchu faced in mainland China was the impact of the strict Mandarin policy. Cathrine was dissatisfied with the closure of some Mongolian primary schools in her hometown. Mandarin policy has had a huge impact on other minority languages. Many ethnic minorities were forced to learn only Mandarin instead of their mother tongue. Many participants also expressed concerns about the future of minority languages in Mainland China. They were apprehensive that the Mandarin policy would entirely crack down on minority languages and

other dialects. The closure of a large number of minority language primary or secondary schools led them to believe that language revitalization would require international assistance. As Cathrine said in example 30:

Example 30

"Actually, I don't need to talk about the situation of Manchu. There were still some Manchu courses in my hometown when I was a child. Let's talk about Mongolian, the biggest symbol of the Mongolian people […] Now, because of the Mandarin policy, many Mongolian primary schools are gone. In another ten years, maybe Mandarin will be the only language left in China, and all others will die." (Cathrine: pos 10&11)

Wendy talked about the restrictions on Cantonese in mainland China, and her primary school classroom was also restricted to using Mandarin. Cantonese, being China's second most prevalent language, was also impacted by the Mandarin policy. As a language currently spoken by only a few thousand people in the world, the road to the revival of Manchu in mainland China will become more difficult. Wendy mentioned in example 31:

Example 31

"Cantonese is an official language, but its use in classrooms is restricted, so I am not sure how free Manchu is in China." (Wendy: pos 5)

Some participants were more optimistic about the revival trend of Manchu overseas. They believed that Manchu was not constrained by the Mandarin policy abroad and possessed a degree of freedom. The other participants contended that the revival of Manchu is inseparable from its origin. The revival of the Manchu language overseas seems to be inseparable from a real overseas Manchu community, but the reality is that the establishment of the community lacks motivation and support. This issue has become the foremost impediment to the revival of the Manchu language abroad.

This chapter explores how overseas Manchu descendants demonstrate agency through language learning and establish global connections with the help of imagined communities. The results show that Manchu is not only a communication tool but also the core of identity construction. Learning Manchu enables overseas Manchu descendants to redefine their cultural identity and get a

sense of belonging in a cross-cultural environment. The Manchu people's global contact and cultural revival have also been promoted by establishing online communities.

However, there were many obstacles to Manchu's renaissance. In mainland China, the Mandarin policy has constrained the development of the Manchu language. In other countries, the Manchu community lacks the support of a physical community. Language learning and cultural activities are often organized autonomously by individuals or a small number of communities. Therefore, policy support, community development, and educational collaboration are necessary to the revitalization of Manchu.

In the next chapter, I explore the impact of investment on identity and the role of global Manchu online communities in the construction of imagined communities by analyzing the social experiences of overseas Manchu descendants.

6. Social Experience: Identity and Cultural Practice in a Global Context

The research in this chapter mainly reveals how overseas Manchu descendants maintain their identity through language investment and cultural practice and promote the revival of Manchu culture. The results show that language investment is an important way to achieve national identity. The language learning and cultural participation of Manchu descendants is a dynamic process deeply influenced by social environment, family support and cultural background. Language learning is not solely an individual behavior, it is also a reflection of the social and cultural environment. The rise of the global Manchu language online community has become an important platform for cross-regional Manchu descendants. This community promotes the sharing of language learning resources. It also helps Manchu descendants build their identity with Manchu culture on a global scale, providing new possibilities for the revival of the Manchu language.

This chapter is divided into five sub-chapters. Section 6.1 discusses how overseas Manchu descendants strengthen their ethnic identity by celebrating traditional festivals and participating in Manchu cultural activities. Section 6.2 analyzes how social experience affects the investment behavior of Manchu descendants in language learning. Section 6.3 discusses the impact of racial discrimination and cultural marginalization on the identity of Manchu descendants. Section 6.4 analyzes the role of the global Manchu descendant online community in language revitalization. Finally, Section 6.5 explores the relationship between the restoration of Manchu surnames and identity.

6.1 Cultural Heritage: Language, Festivals and Identity

Maintaining cultural roots overseas shows respect for one's identity and helps immigrants integrate into mainstream society. At the same time, maintaining cultural uniqueness and promoting the coexistence and development of multiple cultures. The fact that the Manchus are seriously sinicized will cause many Manchus to give up maintaining Manchu culture and traditions. Contrary to the expected results, about half of the participants maintained Manchu culture in the host country in various ways such as celebrating Manchu festivals and making Manchu food. The Banjin Festival commemorates the birthday of the Manchu people. The Banjin Festival is also one of the most important festivals for the Manchus. Cathy wore Manchu costumes to celebrate the Banjin Festival. She believed in the traditional Manchu religion of Shamanism, and she also played the Shaman drum

on this day. She also sent Manchu friends a happy Banjin Festival in Manchu through social media. As she said in example 32:

Example 32

"Qifu (traditional Manchu clothing), flowerpot shoes (traditional Manchu shoes), Qitou (traditional Manchu headdress), Kunqiu (a kind of Manchu winter hat), one ear three earrings, these things of our ancestors cannot be forgotten... I mailed a lot of Qifu from China to Toronto, as well as various jewelry." (Cathy: pos 14)

In addition, Cathy also actively recommended Manchu cuisine to her friends in her daily life. As she said in example 33:

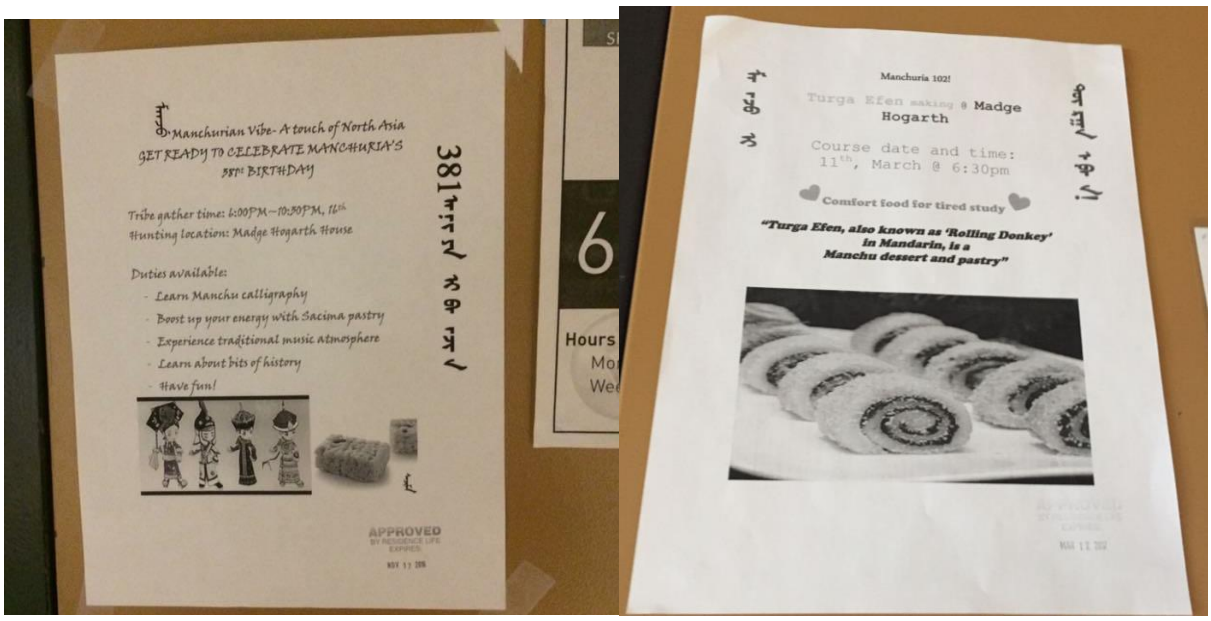
Example 33

"We often have potluck, whether it is Chinese or local people. I basically make our Manchu dishes. There are still a lot of ingredients available in Toronto. We have Chinese supermarkets like T&T. As long as I can buy the ingredients, I will definitely make it. For example, our Manchu milk tea is called Musi in Manchu, and we call it Youchamian in Beijing. I love to share it with my colleagues or friends. And I also introduce some of the history of the dishes to my friends." (Cathy: pos 14)

After the interview, S.H showed me a lot of photos of Manchu culture and Manchu language activities that he participated in during his stay in Germany. Figure 2 and Figure 3 show the event notices of the Manchu language and Manchu cultural activities that S.H made. He exhibited considerable zeal and fervor for Manchu and Manchu cultural activities. He also celebrated the Banjin Festival in accordance with Manchu tradition. During the Banjin Festival, S.H would first take down the portrait of Emperor Nurhaci. Upon cleaning the portrait, he would place it on the altar. He would place white meat, pickled cabbage, fruits, sachima and other dishes in the west direction. He would wear traditional Manchu attire and execute the three kowtow and nine prostration ceremonials accompanied by Aksan music. After the ceremony, he could eat the food. He often made some Manchu delicacies. S.H was an active promoter and protector of Manchu culture and the Manchu language.

Figure 2. Manchu event held by S.H

Figure 3. Manchu culture class held by S.H



Despite Gigi's inability to speak Manchu, she frequently endeavors to learn about Manchu culture and history. Gigi showed her enthusiasm for Manchu culture in the interview. She is confident in her Manchu identity and actively contributes to her community by learning and spreading knowledge of Manchu history and culture. Overseas Manchu descendants who are unable to use the Manchu language strengthen their identity by supporting Manchu culture. Gigi brought her son from Canada to China to experience the Manchu culture. She and her son have a profound interest in Manchu culture. As she said in example 34:

Example 34

"I took my son to the Forbidden City, and we found a guide from the Forbidden City. The guide told me that the position and color of the Eight Banners were related to the directions of east, south, west and north. It was some very specific Feng Shui. My family was from the Bordered Blue Banner, and we were stationed at Xuanwu Gate. For example, blue is equivalent to water. Water has specific directions and properties. Armies with different colored banners were stationed in different places. These are all related to Feng Shui. I am very interested in our Manchu culture. My son also took the initiative to learn about this culture." (Gigi: pos 9)

6.2 Language Investment and Identity Construction in Social Experience

Language learning is not merely an individual activity; it is also a practice deeply embedded in social roles. The trade-offs and decisions of overseas Manchu descendants in learning Manchu are related to their personal learning interests and responsibilities for language preservation. Realistic factors such as parents' expectations of cultural inheritance and professional experience are shaping their language learning trajectories and decisions. Frank's parents are Manchus, but they do not want him to learn Manchu. They want Frank to focus on making money. Anytime he discussed his progress in studying Manchu with his parents, they expressed unhappiness and believed Frank was wasting time. This led to some negative emotions in him and also affected his progress in Manchu learning and the reduction of his time investment. He mentioned in example 35:

Example 35

"People of my parents' generation are all pragmatic, no one is not. Because they all experienced the great famine in China at that time, it was not easy to survive. My parents' family was poor at that time, and there were many brothers and sisters and children, and many people starved to death. It was not easy for them to survive at that time[...] They still think that if this thing can't be exchanged for food and money, it is useless, just like Manchu, it is useless[...] They always say that I should find a job like a doctor, a teacher, a fixed profession, a profession that will not starve to death. They didn't support me as a translator at the beginning, and they thought Manchu was even more useless." (Frank: pos 1)

Conversely, Lina was encouraged by her family and friends as a volunteer manager of the Manchu language group and a private Manchu language teacher. The evaluation of her students also encouraged her teaching confidence. She felt the recognition from others in the encouragement. Such results made her proud of her profession. Although many Manchu language teaching jobs are voluntary and unpaid, she still feels very motivated. She explained in example 36:

Example 36

"Maybe when I introduce myself to others, I prefer to say that I am a Sibe Manchu language teacher first, and then say that I am a salesperson. I think including my colleagues, they all think that my part-time job is like that of an indigenous language teacher. My family also supports my current work. Although I only have two one on one students now. But they all say that they learned a lot from me,

which is also an encouragement for my teaching. This also includes people in the Manchu language group." (Lina: pos 13)

Li (2022: 133) suggests that social experience is dynamic and highly context-related. The learning motivation of Manchu learners is affected by their social experience and environment. Encouragement enhances learners' motivation and willingness to invest in language learning. Instead, students may reduce their investment because their families oppose language learning. This demonstrates the importance of providing a positive learning environment for language learning. Learners' social activities influence their investment.

6.3 Obstacles Facing the Manchus

Most of the participants mentioned the marginalization, stigmatization, and racial discrimination experienced by the Manchus. Participants argued that the racial discrimination experienced by the Manchus was both a challenge to the revitalization of the Manchu language and a threat to Manchu national identity. They believe that if racial discrimination and prejudice are not resolved, the Manchus will continue to be assimilated and eventually lose their national characteristics.

Tony argued that many people's anti-Manchu speech has affected the spread of Manchu culture. He emphasized that many people in mainland China currently have serious prejudices and misunderstandings about the Manchus. He mentioned in example 37:

Example 37

"When others want to revive their cultural identity […] people usually say: "Do you want to restore feudalism? Do you want to be an emperor? Do you want to be an aristocrat? The Qing Dynasty has fallen. Why are you still feudal?" This problem is very popular in mainland China." (Tony: pos 20)

Frank also highlighted the harmful effects of anti-Manchu speech. The influence of Chinese Han chauvinism on ethnic minorities is significant. Many people are currently advocating ethnic assimilation, and many people regard minority cultures as separatism. As he said in example 38:

Example 38

“Han chauvinism is still quite serious in mainland China. When we talk about promoting culture, there are a lot of people in the comment section saying that the Qing Dynasty has fallen[...] Some people also say that Han culture and Mandarin are the last unified national culture of China, whereas all other elements are deemed unorthodox.” (Frank: pos 7&8)

Cathrine believed that due to special historical reasons, the Manchus have a lower sense of national identity than other ethnic minorities, which has also led to a serious situation of assimilation of the Manchus. Historical factors and racial discrimination have led to some Manchus being unwilling to admit their identity and feeling ashamed of it. As she said in example 39:

Example 39

“Despite the proximity of the Manchus and the Mongolians, the Mongolians have a stronger sense of identity. This is a historical and political issue for sure. Many Manchus may still avoid the fact that they are Manchus. You won't see a Mongolian who doesn't recognize his or her identity. The Manchus were persecuted in history, and many people cannot recognize themselves as Manchus. This problem does not exist in other ethnic minorities, and it is also one of the reasons why the Manchus are most seriously sinicized.” (Cathrine: pos 8)

Many participants mentioned that the discriminatory slogan "Expel the Tartars and Restore China," directed at ethnic minorities such as the Manchus and Mongolians in the previous century, remains prevalent in mainland China. Some participants promoted Manchu culture on REDnote and other social media apps, and certain people frequently use this slogan to infest them in comments. Helena has also suffered racial discrimination and attacks on REDnote. As a second-generation immigrant, some people insulted her parents and grandparents as "Manchu refugee families who escaped at the end of the Qing Dynasty." She received a lot of private messages of abuse because she used the word "Manchuria". She was also threatened, which caused her considerable distress.

Helena elaborated on a disadvantageous factor in the revival of Manchu in mainland China. She believed that the revival of Manchu in mainland China should be supported by international organizations. The cooperation between overseas Manchu and mainland Manchu language organizations is more conducive to the promotion of language revival. The distrust of many people towards the international organization will affect this process. As she said in example 40:

Example 40

"Many mainlanders are very hostile to foreign countries or foreigners. When they hear about other countries offering Manchu language courses, they think that other countries want to attack China. They are very hostile to international organizations and transnational organizations." (Helena: pos 4)

Through conversations with participants, I found that some participants prefer to live in a migrant or immigrant country because it has a more inclusive and friendly environment. Participants do not have to worry too much about being discriminated against. The inclusive environment of the host country facilitates employment opportunities for minority immigrants. Lina shared her experience of finding a job. It was difficult for some Chinese ethnic minorities to find jobs in Mainland China. Many companies or factories may decline to employ individuals who have ethnic minority backgrounds, even if they have good working abilities. This was one reason Lina favored residing in the host country. As she said in example 41:

Example 41

"They reject people from Xinjiang due to their background. Chinese Han people may be fine. However, once they know that you are from an ethnic minority, they also reject you. Ethnic communities in Xinjiang face even worse conditions. Many businesses will reject your application for an internship or a job based on your background. Some people use religious differences as an excuse. When I was looking for an internship previously, HR thought I was a Muslim because I'm from Xinjiang. Despite my explanation that I was not Muslim, they refused to hire me. Later, I found numerous jobs one after the other. The conversations went well at first, but they eventually said no because I was an ethnic minority." (Lina: pos 14)

After the interview, Cathy talked about her political depression through a message. Although she does not have to face the disadvantaged situation of the Manchus all the time in the inclusive and friendly environment of Canada, the large amount of discrimination she encountered on social media in mainland China has become the cause of her depression. She felt angry and helpless, and often suffers from insomnia due to depression. Due to moral and ethical concerns, I did not present her experience in the data.

6.4 Global Manchu Online Communities

The construction of a global Manchu language online community has had a profound impact on the cultural identity, language revival and ethnic cohesion of overseas Manchu descendants. This online community mainly relies on the spontaneous organization of Manchu language learners and Manchu culture enthusiasts around the world, especially through social media and instant messaging platforms to establish group chats to achieve resource sharing and mutual learning. These online groups spread Manchu culture by sharing language teaching materials, holding online lectures and conducting cultural discussions.

After the interview, I was invited by Tony to attend a Manchu online lecture. The theme of this lecture is: Stories of Mother Tongue Inheritance, Sibe Dialogue from Taipei. This lecture was hosted by Dr. Kicengge. He is a professor of Sibe ethnicity. I mentioned the Manchu and Sibe courses he teaches in my introduction. The content of the lecture is Professor Guang Dingyuan, a descendant of the Sibe people in Taiwan, telling the story of his Sibe language inheritance. The lecture was held on September 15, 2024, and was broadcast live via Zoom. Professor Guang Dingyuan was born in Yili, Xinjiang. He immigrated to Taiwan more than 60 years ago, but he still speaks standard Sibe. There were many participants in this online lecture. The entire lecture was completed in Sibe and Manchu. During the lecture, many attendees had a lot of interactions with the two professors. Before the end of the live broadcast, they expressed their gratitude for this lecture. The attendees acquired substantial knowledge during the talk and expressed gratitude to the two lecturers for offering such a good opportunity. Professor Guang Dingyuan has been promoting Sibe in Taiwan for decades. From the stories shared by Professor Guang Dingyuan, I also felt the overseas Manchu descendants' affirmation of their identity and their unwavering belief in the inheritance of their native language.

The decentralized and self-organized online community model enables Manchu descendants around the world to cross geographical boundaries, form an "imagined community" in virtual space, and jointly participate in the revival of the Manchu language. As these communities expand, more and more individuals are willing to contribute funds, time and expertise, enabling the long-term development of Manchu language education and cultural heritage. Lina, who volunteers as the administrator of the Manchu language group, found that more and more learners spontaneously shared some learning materials and Manchu articles in the group. She felt the enthusiasm of learners from all over the world. The spontaneous information sharing also made the Manchu language learning group full of vitality. As she said in example 42:

Example 42

"This is no longer a lonely task. I can feel that I am not fighting alone. I can feel the strength of our unity." (Lina: pos 12)

The functions of online communities somewhat compensate for the deficiencies resulting from the absence of physical communities. Lina also shared some daily life in the Manchu language learning group. As she said in example 43:

Example 43

"Everyone basically knows each other or has studied with the same teacher[...] We are like a community, a settlement. In the chat group, everyone says good morning and good night to each other in Sibe, wishes each other well, and chats about daily life[...] It is certain that we have formed a virtual global network settlement." (Lina: pos 12)

Wendy's father was keen on Manchu cultural research and joined the Manchu Cultural Research Association. He also joined a chat group for Manchu descendants. Many participants' relatives have joined in shared Manchu group chats, and online cultural communities, or have maintained a longstanding interest in Manchu culture and language. Wendy mentioned in example 44:

Example 44

"My dad joined the Manchu Culture Research Association. He founded an association in Canton and they had a small group similar to the Eight Banners descendants or Manchu descendants." (Wendy: pos 4)

Most of the participants were very interested in this study and were curious about how I found other participants. Due to ethical and privacy considerations, I did not disclose other participants' information, however, I did mention the countries or regions where other participants lived. After the interview, a pair of participants told me through private messages that they were online friends and had studied Manchu with the same teacher. The interesting thing was that they had no idea each other had taken part in the interview until they ended it.

6.5 Cultural Identity in Name and Surname

Surnames are associated with deep ethnic memory, cultural identity, and individual identity. For the Manchus, the reinstatement and utilization of traditional surnames serve as a significant method of cultural rejuvenation and signify the individual's reconnection with their ethnic identity. The Manchus were forced to abandon their surnames, as previously mentioned. This shows that the shift in surnames is usually closely related to the alterations in historical, political and social settings. In recent years, with the rise of the cultural revival movement, some Manchu descendants have begun to restore the use of traditional surnames. For example, except for Tony, who did not know his Manchu surname, the participants in this study used their Manchu surnames in their lives. They introduced their Manchu surnames to friends or used their Manchu surnames in their social accounts. This phenomenon can be understood by the investment concept proposed by Norton (2000): Restoring the Manchu surname is not only a re-identification of historical identity but also a cultural investment, which enables individuals to gain a stronger sense of identity and symbolic resources within the ethnic group and in cross-cultural exchanges. Contrary to the expected results, although all participants voiced support for the restoration of Manchu surnames, most of them expressed concerns about the consequences of using Manchu surnames.

Tony believed that not every Manchu was willing to restore their Manchu surname, which stems from the unfair treatment and harm suffered by the Manchu people in history. As he said in example 45:

Example 45

"China has experienced a lot of political turmoil in the past, and the Manchu identity was particularly sensitive at that time[...] People were forced to erase their identity[...] Later, the character of the Manchus was insulted[...] So, if it can be traced, it can be encouraged to trace it back, and people can mark their previous Manchu surname[...] However, not everyone is capable, so we can only do our best." (Tony: pos 12)

Frank shared the same view as Tony, as he said in example 46:

Example 46

"My parents will definitely say that they think it is unnecessary, and I think they will be very disgusted. They do not recognize their Manchu identity. In fact, many Manchu people are not willing to do this

now. If you do this, many people really cannot accept it. If you want them to slowly accept these surnames and culture, it is actually a very long process." (Frank: pos 12)

Cathy maintained that restoring the use of Manchu surnames would lead to more racial discrimination against Manchu people. Chinese individuals prioritize ethnic cohesion to a greater extent. Restoring Manchu surnames would make more Chinese people think that this is a signal of separatism. As Cathy said in example 47:

Example 47

"Once the Manchu surnames are restored, I think many Chinese will discriminate against Manchu people more. Many people will definitely say that restoring Manchu surnames is restoring feudalism. And they will say that we are divisive. Another point is that there are too many fake Manchus in China now. They are Han people who change their ID cards to Manchu by forging. They will not agree with real Manchus doing this. Sometimes, in China, being unique or having characteristics is not favored. People should follow the crowd. Don't be special, this is also their ideology." (Cathy: pos 11)

Many participants conveyed their optimism regarding the utilization of Manchu names, asserting that such names remain unaffected by historical influences, unlike surnames, and are more readily embraced by the Manchu populace. They believed that the use of names is more helpful in constructing identity. Tony gave an example of the use of Manchu names in Hong Kong. He explained in example 48:

Example 48

"For example, in Mainland China, if your name is Wang Xiaoming, you can't add your English name Peter on your ID card. But we Hong Kong people can do this. Hong Kong people have Chinese names, and then I can add Tony to my English name, or my Manchu name on my Hong Kong ID. Many of us add English names. I'm not sure any part of China can do this. Hong Kong people can add an English name to their Chinese name on their ID card. I believe it can be done this way: The Chinese name comes first, and the Manchu name comes last. Second, if you do this, your children will be motivated to learn Manchu. Your children will want to know what his name means, and after searching it, they will learn Manchu." (Tony: pos 13)

This chapter shows that the language investment and identity of overseas Manchu

descendants are deeply influenced by social experience, cultural environment and the global Manchu online community. Language learning for Manchu descendants is not only the cultivation of personal skills but also a process of reconstructing cultural identity and maintaining national belonging. The development of the global Manchu online community offers Manchu descendants a platform for cross-regional connection. Through this community, they may share language learning resources and create a sense of identity with the Manchu culture in a virtual place. Factors such as festivals, family support, social experiences, and racial discrimination all affect the Manchu descendants' choice of language and identity. In the context of globalization, the revival of Manchu language and Manchu culture depends not only on individual learning efforts, but also on the support and collaboration of society. The interactive model of the global Manchu online community closely links language learning with the establishment of identity, opening up new possibilities for the revival of Manchu culture.

7. Conclusion

This study combined the comprehensive framework proposed by Li to reveal the impact of investment, agency, and imaginary space on Manchu learners. The study used the interview data from ten participants to answer the three research questions.

The first research question: How do different levels of Manchu language knowledge in the Manchu language affect the ethnic self-identification of Manchu immigrants and overseas descendants?

This study found a positive correlation between the identity of overseas Manchu and their proficiency in the Manchu language and knowledge thereof. Factors affecting the strength of this positive correlation include environmental factors and individual factors. Environmental factors affect the investment of overseas Manchu descendants in language learning. When learners are encouraged or praised, their language ability is recognized. Encouragement strengthens learners' sense of belonging to the language and culture. It also motivates them to learn the language. As Seven (2020: 70) said, learning motivation is mainly influenced by learners' educational experience. Learners' beliefs can also be an important motivation, and these beliefs are often influenced by their family and educational background (Seven 2020: 70). A detrimental environment will diminish the investment and enthusiasm of Manchu learners. None of the participants lived in an immersive language environment, but most of them overcame the difficulties and created a suitable language learning environment and model for themselves.

The strain of language learning impacted the agency, prompting some participants to become active language learners or cultural communicators. They were eager to spread the Manchu language and culture, therefore they actively participated in language learning. Participants who could not use Manchu chose to protect Manchu culture by understanding and spreading Manchu culture and history. The challenges and obstacles of language learning in this study assisted all participants who could use Manchu in reaching the intermediate and advanced levels of Manchu. Participants who could not use Manchu gave up language learning due to practical difficulties. None of the participants gave up on learning Manchu midway. Some participants were unable to study Manchu regularly due to work and other responsibilities, which resulted in a decline in their Manchu language proficiency. However, these participants' passion for language learning remained unchanged.

The lack of overseas Manchu communities did not diminish the identity of overseas Manchu descendants. None of the participants weakened or gave up their Manchu identity due to long-term living in immigrant countries. The participants did not experience alienation from the Manchu language and culture due to their integration into the new culture.

The second research question: How do Manchu immigrants and overseas descendants construct and maintain their ethnic identity in their host countries?

By commemorating Manchu celebrations, cooking Manchu food, insisting on online Manchu communication, spreading Manchu culture among friends, and using other ways, overseas Manchu descendants preserve their ethnic identity. The Global Manchu Online Community provides a platform for overseas Manchu descendants to discover the Manchu language and improve their sense of belonging. Through various social media platforms, this community assists Manchus in building links across geographic limitations. Some individuals generally chatted with Manchu descendants dwelling in Manchuria and Xinjiang Sibe Autonomous Region, which helped them discipline the Manchu language and deepened their knowledge of Manchu culture. Overseas Manchu descendants have finally established a global online community by sharing resources and experiences with each other. In this study, certain individuals are friends or classmates in reality. They discovered this study through various social media platforms. Several overseas Manchu descendants assisted me in disseminating recruitment information within various Manchu online learning and communicating groups. This indicates that the online Manchu community possesses significant information distribution and influence.

Online communities also provide overseas Manchu descendants with a place to express themselves and avoid prejudices. Certain participants have faced discrimination while advocating for Manchu culture on social media in mainland China. International social media provides Manchu descendants with more opportunities for cultural dissemination. Furthermore, the existing overseas Manchu online community manifests as decentralized online discussion groups. Such decentralized online groups and resource dissemination methods can effectively prevent a single group from being attacked. As mentioned in Bai's (2008) study, a large number of Manchu websites have been attacked. Decentralized online groups can also spread resources more widely.

The third research question: For Manchu immigrants, does the potential for the spread and revitalization of the Manchu language hold more promise overseas compared to mainland China?

The international Manchu revival is deficient in adequate Manchu resources and effective pedagogical approaches. The Manchu revival in mainland China encounters challenges, including the Mandarin policy and attacks from racists. Although international social media has given Manchu and Manchu culture adequate space to spread, the pedagogical approaches of many Manchu courses remain concerning. Certain Manchu classes solely instruct students in “spelling Manchu”, which significantly diverges from the pronunciation of functional Manchu. Adopting the collaborative approach between abroad and mainland China for Manchu instruction is more effective for the revival of the Manchu language. Overseas Manchu educators can collaborate with Manchu groups in mainland China through interviews or online meetings. This collaboration overcomes many limitations and improves the quality of Manchu language teaching overseas.

This study discusses the practical needs of overseas Manchu descendants. Establishing physical communities is also necessary despite the numerous sensible difficulties of establishing overseas Manchu communities. Physical communities can make up for the shortcomings of online communities. Chinese or Mongolian schools may assist in establishing Manchu classes and managing Manchu language days. The formation of ethnic mutual aid societies, cross-ethnic communities, and endangered language joint communities can serve as substitutes for Manchu communities, facilitating support for overseas Manchu descendants. For instance, Mongolian-Manchu mutual aid societies and Tungusic language collaborative communities. Furthermore, international universities may collaborate with Chinese institutions that offer Manchu language courses. Overseas Manchu descendants or students may travel to Manchuria or the Manchu and Sibe Autonomous Regions for language study through exchange programs. Appropriate agencies, institutions, or departments may offer Manchu scholarships or research grants to students.

The diversity of different language groups is frequently overlooked in the definition of "nationality." This research shows that language and cultural identity are essential to personal identity. Some individuals value their cultural identity more than their national identity. Identifying overseas Manchu descendants as Chinese may overlook their uniqueness. The Manchus' distinct cultural and historical heritage, as well as the stress and oppression they have experienced, are important to be acknowledged.

This study promotes global Manchu language revival and contributes to the definition of identity among overseas Manchu descendants. My analysis benefits from Li's comprehensive framework of identity definition and theories on investment, agency, and imagined communities. Li's framework allows for the examination of transformations in identity construction over long-term

linguistic and social experiences (Li 2022: 135). This study examines the ten participants collectively, highlighting the shared characteristics of overseas Manchu descendants and the distinctiveness of overseas Manchu online communities. The participants come from different and unique cultural backgrounds, so adding to the depth of the data.

The language investment of overseas Manchu descendants is mainly reflected in the pursuit of cultural identity rather than the pursuit of economic or social advantages. Since Manchu lacks actual economic value in contemporary society, the motivation for learning Manchu comes more from identity, cultural heritage and sense of responsibility. Norton's (1995: 2000) investment theory usually emphasizes the capital accumulation of language learners in the social environment. However, for learners of endangered languages, language learning is often not for the purpose of obtaining economic returns, but more for the reconstruction of identity. Therefore, the investment theory has certain limitations in this context because it fails to fully explain the uniqueness of language learning as an identity investment. This finding helps to expand the applicability of investment theory in the study of endangered languages and emphasizes the key role of identity in language revitalization.

This study is a small-scale study, and the perspectives of ten participants are not enough to represent all overseas Manchu descendants. In contrast to anticipated outcomes, all participants in this study affirmed their Manchu identity and expressed a commitment to preserving and passing on the Manchu language and culture. This study did not involve the views of those Manchu descendants who deny their Manchu identity, so the data collected may have some representativeness issues. The participants were mainly people who recognized their identity and appreciated Manchu culture. The revival of Manchu language is a long-term and ever-changing process, and my research time was short, so I could not track the specific changes in the revival process and the transformation of the participants' identities. In addition, since this study did not conduct regional or generational comparisons, it was impossible to examine the differences in these issues among Manchu descendants in different regions or eras.

Future research can cover a wider range of Manchu groups. Comparing the views of Manchu descendants from different generations and regions on Manchu language and identity, it can help promote the construction of overseas Manchu communities and the revival of Manchu language. At the same time, foreign descendants who refuse to identify with Manchu identity should also be included in the research field. For some Manchu people, they may choose not to respond to relevant questions or avoid talking about it. Such studies can directly explore the factors affecting these groups' identity. Studying Manchu descendants who do not recognize their cultural identity can provide a

deeper understanding of the changing process of identity, generally how social context shapes them. Finally, future research should also focus on the further development of the global Manchu online community. The community function can be improved by comparing the Manchu online community with other endangered language communities. Manchu language educators and platforms can strengthen cooperation with public welfare organizations dedicated to protecting endangered languages, improve the quality of online Manchu courses, and provide free Manchu learning resources to encourage more overseas Manchu people to participate.

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Appendix A: Pre- interview Questionnaire for Participants

Name: _____

Gender: _____

Age: _____

Email Address: _____

Your Birthplace (City, Country): _____

Current Place of Residence: _____

Which of the following describe you the best?

A. **First-generation Immigrant**
B. **Second-generation Immigrant**
C. **International Student**
D. **Overseas worker**
E. **Other (specify)**

What Languages do you Speak? _____

What language(s) do you consider your native language(s)?_____

Do you have or know your own Manchu Surname? _____

Do you speak Manchu?

A. **I don't speak Manchu.**
B. **I understand it but do not speak it.**
C. **I can say only several phrases.**
D. **I can write, understand and use simple Manchu.**
E. **I can carry out a conversation in the language.**
F. **I speak Manchu fluently.**

Do you know your family's Manchu history, or basic Manchu History?

A. No.

B. Yes, I know my family's Manchu history and I have a basic knowledge of Manchu History.

C. Yes, I know family history, but not much about Manchu history.

D. I don't know much about my family history, but I know Manchu history.

E. Yes, I know my family history very well and know a lot about Manchu history.

Appendix B: Interview Outline

Linguistic repertoires and knowledge of Manchu language (for descendants of the Manchus who can speak Manchu)

1. How many languages do you speak? How proficient are you in each language? Do you speak Manchu?

2. If you can speak Manchu, how did you learn the language?

3. What is your motivation for learning Manchu? Did you learn through family or school?

4. What ways do you know to learn Manchu? For example, university courses, online courses, etc.

5. Which resources you found the most useful when learning Manchu?

6. If you use Manchu, where do you use it? With whom? How often?

Linguistic repertoires and knowledge of Manchu language (for descendants of the Manchus who cannot speak Manchu)

1. How many languages do you speak? How proficient are you in each language?

2. Are you considering in learning Manchu? Why or why not? What would motivate you? Would you consider passing it? Why or why not?

3.Do you know where you could learn Manchu? Have you heard of any language courses? Where? Have you seen any adds? Would you be interested in investing time and attenting language courses? Why? Why not?

Identity and Social Experience

1. Do you have or know your Manchu surname? Do you think it is necessary to revive the Manchu surname and given name? Why or why not?

2. When people ask about your background, how do you usually describe yourself? Would you say, that you feel somehow connected to Manchu heritage?

3. Do any of your family members speak Manchu?

4. What aspects of being Manchu you find the most important and meaningful for you?

5. What Manchu traditions do you know?

6. Are you willing to actively pass on Manchu to the next generation? If so, what is your motivation? If not, what is your reason?

7. In your view, what are some of the main obstacles to maintaining and passing on the Manchu language and culture to future generations?

8. Do you know some overseas Manchu communities or Manchu online communities? Are you connected to any of them? If so, to which of them? How active are you in these communities?

The Student's Statement on Plagiarism

I, Rao Yao , have read the requirements for research papers in the MA programme Sociolinguistics and Multilingualism. I understand that plagiarism is wrong and that it can take different forms, some direct and some indirect. I also understand that plagiarism in an essay, project or thesis submitted to this programme will result in a greatly reduced mark or rejection of the paper entirely.

Date: 11/04/2025

Signature: 